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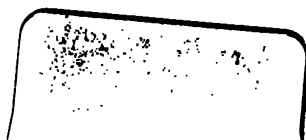
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AUSTIN ELLIOT.



AUSTIN ELLIOT.

BY
HENRY KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "RAVENSHOE" ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. II.

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AUSTIN ELLIOT.

CHAPTER I.

AUSTIN sat the long debate of Monday out; and left the House at half-past two. There was news from India, which was announced by Lord Jocelyn; and then the weary Corn-law debate began, and Sir Robert Peel, getting on his legs, spoke calmly and deliberately for four hours, explaining what had taken place in the autumn, and other matters, while Austin sat and listened as patiently as a reporter. So the next morning, instead of riding out before breakfast, he lay in bed, in a happy sleep, till eleven, dreaming, among other trifles, that Sir Robert Peel had sent Aunt Maria with a hostile message to Sir John

Tyrrell, and that Colonel Evans was escorted to the hustings opposite Northumberland House by a troop of Sikh cavalry, headed by old James. He slept so long, that his servant would not stand it any longer, and woke him; and as soon as he had breakfasted he went off westward to see Eleanor.

She was quite herself again, though she looked very pale. He had a happy morning with her. He gave her, from recollection, the heads of Sir Robert Peel's explanation. She sat sewing at her needle-work all the time, and every now and then asked a question. She not only appeared interested, but she was so. When he had done, she put her needle into her canvas, and deliberately expressed her opinion that it was unsatisfactory; that the one hitch in it was, that he ought to have gone to the country, and had not done so. And Austin argued with her, and tangled her wool, and said she was obstinate and disagreeable; but she stuck to her opinion about the dissolution, and would not be talked out of it. And so they passed a long happy morning together, and were both of them sorry when old James announced luncheon, and they had to go down to the dining-room, where was Aunt Maria, boisterously good-humoured, and very red in the face, who amused

herself by continuous railing abuse against Sir Robert Peel.

And a most exciting and delightful month it was. The four friends—the brothers Barty, Eleanor, and Austin, were more together this month than ever they were afterwards. Lord Charles Barty spoke once, and spoke very well indeed; and Austin and blind Lord Edward, who had sat patiently in the gallery to hear him, brought him home in triumphant delight to Eleanor, and made her give them supper in honour of the great event; and a right pleasant supper those four noble souls had. Then all sorts of things happened, and kept them alive. Sir De Lacy Evans got in for Westminster, at which Lord Charles and Eleanor were glad, though Austin would have preferred Captain Rous, as he liked a snack of Toryism in his politics. Then Lord Lincoln was rejected for Notts, which made them all sorry, and made Lord Charles say what *he* would have done if *his* father had *dared* to influence his election for Granitebridge. Then there was a Polish insurrection, which caused quiet little Eleanor to utter the most ferocious and revolutionary sentiments, about the Emperors of Russia and Austria, and which incited Lord Edward to compose a piece of music expressive of the woes of

Poland and their triumphant redressal; which was played by hammering away at the black keys until they were all out of tune, and then beginning on the white; and, when they were finished, putting on the pedals and working both together in one magnificent crash. But, in spite of all this, the Polish revolt ended as all other Polish revolts will, until the cows come home; and the Poles got lovingly corrected by their father, Nicholas.

Then came the news of Moodkee and Ferozeshah; and Eleanor cried about Sir Robert Sale; and Lord Edward got into the organ-loft at St. Paul's, and induced the organist to let him play the people out; and he played such a triumphant symphony, that the people all came back again, under the impression that, this being Lent, the organist had incautiously refreshed himself with strong liquors on a fasting stomach; and the organist had to go secretly to the back part of the organ and let off the wind. It was a happy month for these four innocent souls, and before their golden happy laughter Aunt Maria retired into her dressing-room, and had her meals and scolded her maid there, to every one's great content.

And Captain Hertford came but seldom that month—whether he was busy, or because for a time he felt

himself beaten by the young people, we cannot say. It was the happiest month that these four had had, since they had known one another.

Did either of the three others know of the weary grief that was at Eleanor's heart; of the dark cloud which settled down on her face each night, as soon as they were gone, and had left her alone to the long night-watches? Not one of them, or they would surely have said that she was the most valiant and noble little martyr on earth. Many things had to happen before Austin found it out; and one of that group never found it out at all.

Patiently she would sit at her window, looking southward across the crescent, at one light in some sick person's room opposite, and wondering whether their burden was so heavy as her own, until the last footfall died away in the deserted street. Sometimes Aunt Maria would send for her after they were gone, and say such terrible things to her, as only one woman can say to another—nay, as only a woman well practised in scolding like Aunt Maria can say. But Eleanor would only sit and listen, with folded hands. She had a grief deeper than Aunt Maria, a grief which made Aunt Maria's furious scolding sound like the singing of a mosquito outside the net—a

sound which makes your sleep uneasy, but which does not wake you.

That happy month drew to a close. On the 14th they were all together. The cloud which had settled on Eleanor's face every night after they had left her, grew visible by day. On the 14th of March, when they were all together again, Austin noticed that she looked anxious and pale. Lord Charles's wildest Radical sallies only brought a faint smile into the close-set mouth, and a feeble flash into the great gray eyes. Austin knew that the time of her monthly pilgrimage was approaching, and did not wonder; the others thought she was ill. Lord Edward formed a theory of her having caught cold at church, and she encouraged it.

It was Sunday evening. Lord Edward had gone with her to the Abbey, and the two sinners, Lord Charles and Austin, had not gone with them. They were spending the evening at her house, and laying out plans for the next week. There would be no important debate the next night, and Lord Charles said that if Eleanor would promise to give a supper afterwards, that he would go down to the House and speak on the Silk question; but she said:

"You must not come here to-morrow or the next

day. Austin knows that I cannot receive to-morrow. I have to meet my man of business to-morrow, and that always agitates me so that I am fit for nothing the next day. If any of you are going to be kind, you may call on Tuesday and ask how I am, but I cannot receive you. I have passed a very happy month. If we four young people should never pass such another together, let us always look back on this one. Good night."

The next month was not such a pleasant one by any means. Politics were becoming embroiled. Mr. Disraeli was saying the most terrible things, and Sir Robert's temper was not always equal to bearing them. Every one was getting hot and angry, and saying things they did not mean. And Austin, having less to do with the matter than most others, was rather hotter and angrier than anybody else. They saw but little of Eleanor, and she for her part wished that the Corn bill was done with for ever, either one way or another.

CHAPTER II.

So little did Austin think about the matter which had troubled him before, that the day of Eleanor's monthly pilgrimage would have passed by altogether without his having noticed it, had it not been for a mere accident, the history of which is this.

Austin had a very good habit of riding out early in the morning before the streets were full, and the smoke had settled down ; and on the 15th of April he woke early, and said that he would ride out.

He rang the bell, and when his servant came he ordered his horse to be saddled while he dressed, and called " Robin."

The servant called " Robin " too, but Robin was not in his usual place at the foot of the bed, and on further search it became evident that Robin was not in the house, nor in the street either.

"I brought him in last night," said Austin. "Run round to Miss Hilton's, and see if he is there."

By the time Austin had done dressing, and was standing on the doorstep, in a pair of yellow riding trousers, and a blue neckcloth, his man came back. The dog was not there. It became evident that the dog was stolen.

Austin was vexed and irresolute. At last a foolish scullion-wench, in the lower regions, incautiously volunteered information. Austin's servants immediately claimed that she should be haled before him, and interrogated.

She came upstairs in pattens, with a mop in her hand, her hair all tumbled and tangled, in a dreadful fright. Austin's valet offered to hold her mop for her: she refused. He tried to take it from her; she fought him and beat him, and was ushered into Austin's presence, red, triumphant, with her mop in her hand.

Her mysterious communication about the dog amounted to very little indeed. She had found the dog scratching at the door, and had let him out for a run, "Which the Milk had seen her."

"Find the policeman, and tell him," said Austin; "as I come home I will ride round by James's."

Riding about the west end of London before nine o'clock on an April morning is a very pleasant pastime. The streets are nearly empty, and you can dawdle as much as you like, while in Piccadilly and such places; the air—should the wind have anything of west in it—is as fresh as it is in the country. Everybody's horses are out exercising, too: and you can see their legs, eyes, tails, and noses showing out of their clothes, and may, if you like, drive yourself mad, by calculating, on the "ex pede Herculem" plan—by an effort of comparative anatomy far beyond Owen—what sort of horses they are, and how much they are worth apiece. You can also see the British cabman free from the cares of office, and many other strange sights, not to be met with later in the day.

It was a very pleasant ride that Austin had on this spring morning. He rode slowly over the piece of wood pavement between Sackville Street and Bond Street, and then trotted till he came to the small patch opposite Devonshire House (both these are laid down in good granite now), where there was a horse down as usual. Then he walked slowly down the hill, and, turning into the newly-opened park, had a gallop along Rotten Row, and, passing out by Kensington Gate, began to feel his way slowly eastward once more.

Through fresh squares, where the lilac was already budding, through squares and streets which grew grander and grander, till they culminated in Belgrave Square itself, and then into the lower part of the town which lies south-east of it.

It is astonishing how rapidly the town degenerates to the south-east of Belgrave Square towards Vauxhall Bridge; or, to be more correct, did degenerate, in those days. From great mansions you suddenly find yourself among ten-roomed houses. So you rapidly deteriorate to six rooms, to four, to old bankrupt show vans taken off their wheels, and moved on the waste ground, like old worn-out hulks; and, after them, dust and ashes, and old paper-hangings, and piles of lath and plaster, and pots and kettles, and swarms of wild children; to whom this waste of ash-heaps are mountains, and the stagnant fever-pools, lakes—who build here for themselves the fairy castles of childhood, with pot-sherds and oyster-shells, and who seem to enjoy more shrill wild happiness, than the children of any other class in the community.

Austin paused before he came to this range of dust Alps. At the junction of two low streets, between Vauxhall Bridge and Millbank, there stood

a house by itself, with a garden in front, and a leafless arbour. This was James's, and James himself, in his shirt sleeves, was in the front garden, drowning some puppies in a bucket.

As Austin reined up, and paused before this house, the population turned out to see the splendid apparition. Such a handsome young gentleman, so nobly dressed, on such a beautiful horse, before half-past ten, was really something to look at. Was there never a lady of Shalott among those busy worn needlewomen, stitching behind the dirty blinds, who looked out and fell in love with this noble young Camelot? Who knows?

" She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
And she looked down to Camelot."

Poor things! Sitting there feeding on their own fancies, month by month, it is a wonder how respectable, as a class, these poor folks are. If it were not for the cheap novels, what would become of them?

Austin drew up. Mr. James was so busy drowning the puppies that he did not hear him. So Austin cried out, "Hallo!"

Immediately he heard an unknown number (he says nine hundred, but that is an exaggeration) of dogs, dash out of barrels in the back yard, and choke themselves with their collars. Before they had got wind to bark, a sound was heard as of a strong man swearing. At which these dogs (number unknown, Austin saw afterwards thirty-five bull-dogs, and a cloud of black-and-tan terriers, which, to use his own vigorous expression, darkened the air) all rattled their chains, and went silently back among the straw.

All except an invisible small dog, who, from the volume of his voice, seemed to be the very dog in the "Arabian Nights," which came out of the walnut-shell. He continuing to bark, was audibly kicked by the strong man, and Mr. James, having drowned the last puppy, came towards Austin, hat in hand.

Mr. James, a great, handsome giant; was, and is, one of the most remarkable men in the country. He was the greatest and most successful cynoclept, or dog-dealer, in England, and consequently in the world. If a Chinese Mandarin had sent an order to Mr. James for a dozen fat, blue, hairless dogs, to be cooked for a *fête cham-*

pêtre] at Pekin, Mr. James would have executed the order by the next mail, without winking his eye. Mr. James was the greatest dog-fancier in England, and, I am exceedingly sorry to say, that Austin was one of his best customers.

I have hinted at Austin's low taste for dogs before this. With all his high political ambition, this low taste was one black spot in his character. He had an ambition to possess the smallest black-and-tan terrier in England, apparently for the delectation of his groom, for they were always kept at the Mews with his horses. The groom became, to a certain extent, debauched through these dogs. Prize-fighters, and far worse, used to make court to that young man, and take him to public-houses, free of expense, for the mere privilege of handling these wonderful dogs, the largest of which did not weigh more than four pounds. Austin had sometimes given at the rate of four guineas a pound for them. Robin had never considered them to be dogs at all, and had treated them accordingly.

The enormous sums paid for these dogs, and the fact of their being regularly stole once a week, and recovered and sent home by Mr. James, had ended in Mr. James, great man as he was, being a

creature of Austin's. He considered Austin to be a type of the real English gentleman, the last hope of a degenerate age. Consequently, when he had done drowning his puppies and saw Austin at his gate, he advanced towards him with a very low bow.

"James," said Austin, "I have lost Robin."

"What o'clock, sir?"

"About seven."

"Then I can't let you have him before to-morrow morning, sir. My cads were all out before that. Will half-past eight to-morrow morning do, sir?"

"It must, I suppose," said Austin, "unless he comes home by himself."

Mr. James was much amused by this supposition. He said that Mr. Elliot would have his joke; and requested that Austin would dismount.

Austin did so, and Mr. James called for Sam. Sam came. The invisible strong man before mentioned—a young man, in his shirt and trousers, who had not washed himself, and who looked like a prize-fighter under a cloud—which indeed he was. With him came Mr. James's own favourite dog—a white bull-terrier, who smelt Austin's legs and gave him a creeping up his back. After which he went

into James's yard and bought the dog which came out of the walnut-shell for seven guineas.

Mr. James had not done with Austin. It appeared that in the next street, towards the river, there was a dog, belonging to a master sweep, which Mr. Elliot *must* see, if he wanted to know what a dog was. Austin, having given a shilling to the obscured prize-fighter, who was waiting for an opportunity to wash, mounted his horse and accompanied Mr. James and Mr. James's bull-terrier.

The master sweep was in his gateway, and between his legs was a white bull-terrier, exactly like Mr. James's. Mr. James took his dog by the neck, the sweep did the same. Austin called out, "James, I won't have it!" but it was too late, the dogs were at one another's throats, and the douce respectable Mr. James was transformed into a shouting blackguard; while Austin found himself, in spite of his feelings of shame, looking on at the most brutal sport in the world. Every man who sets two dogs to fight, ought to be beaten with a good thick stick.

Whether it was that the residence of such a great cynoclept as Mr. James had debauched the neighbourhoods and given to it a tendency to keep surreptitious dogs: or whether the fact of its being what

Mr. Dickens calls a "shy" neighbourhood, with infinite facilities of sending all dogs to play with the children on the dust-heaps, in the rear, on the appearance of the taxgatherer, induced every householder in these parts to keep a dog, I know not. But there was a dog in every house ; and the moment the sound of the fight began, they rushed forth to see the fun. Some leaped out of the windows of garrets, where they had been confined for their sins ; others walked staggeringly along the tops of walls, bristling with glass bottles ; some squeezed themselves, panting, through impossible places ; and one fell into a water-butt, where he paddled and sneezed, until his mistress took him out by his tail, and banged him about the head with her shoe ; but the result was, that Austin, standing there on horseback, with the hope of stopping the cruel work at the first opportunity ; found that his horse's legs were in, as it were, a bath of dogs, who yelped and snapped and snarled round the two rearing combatants in the midst.

And then suddenly he became aware that his own dog Robin was in the midst of them. Whether he had dropped from the skies, or risen out of the earth he knew not, but there was Robin—his own Robin—going round and round the dogs, and through

and through the dogs, asking this one, how it came about, and that one, who was getting the best of it, and another one what they had better do? Robin—gay, handsome, rollicking Robin—was there, making himself agreeable to the ladies, giving the best advice to the gentlemen, under the very nose of his own master's horse, not having recognised either horse or master in his excitement.

Austin heard some one call the dog by name behind him. He turned round, and he felt sick and faint, as well he might.

For there, in the midst of all this squalid black-guardism, was Eleanor—Eleanor herself. She was dressed in common, almost shabby, clothes. Her veil was up, and her eyes were red with weeping; and on her face was the very expression which he had expected to see there on this very day of the month—worn anxiety, grief, and shuddering terror.

She was standing on the pavement feebly crying, "Robin! Robin!" but when she saw his face she cried out, "Austin, Austin! come to me!"

CHAPTER III.

AUSTIN caught Mr. James's assistant, and got him to lead his horse home. And in the next moment he was by Eleanor's side, and Robin was bounding gladly around them. She took his arm, and they walked homewards together.

Poor Eleanor was very much distressed, and agitated. She had her veil down, and was crying, and Austin gently comforted her. When she had partly recovered from her tears, she said, "It was so naughty of Robin to run away from me after those dogs." Austin would have liked to ask an explanation of her appearance there, but he did not like to. Eleanor was very much distressed and hysterical, and he wisely held his tongue.

Nevertheless, he was very much inclined to be angry with her. She had been going to church a

great deal lately,—going on week days too,—and always to what he would have called ‘Tractarian’ churches. Once she had asked him if he would be angry, if she were to turn Papist. Now Austin’s sole religious creed at this time, was a political hatred, derived from his father, of the ‘Catholics,’ and never having risen so high in religious thought as Tractarianism, he felt a nearly equal jealousy of them. He got it now into his head, that Eleanor had some spiritual adviser, either very High Church, or Papist, who had persuaded her to take these monthly journeys in this garb, to this neighbourhood, on the grounds of religious mortification. It was by no means an unnatural conclusion. He was inclined to be angry with her, and determined to argue with her on the folly of it.

He was very much inclined to be angry. He had very nearly succeeded in making himself so, when she pressed his arm, and said,

“Are you angry, Austin?”

“No,” he said,—“I mean yes. I am furiously angry, my darling. How do you think that you can please God, by appearing in such a place as that where I found you, in such a dress? Don’t you suffer penance enough at home, every day of your

life, without allowing a priest to bind a grievous burden on your back, which he, himself, would not touch with one of his fingers?"

Ah! if she had told him the truth! She saw his error. She saw that he thought she was making some kind of religious pilgrimage, and she encouraged his error. In her deep love for him, in her anxiety for his honour and fame, she encouraged it. It was not so very long after this, that sitting at her dressing-table, she noticed that her hair was slightly grey. She put down her brushes, and thought of her foolish, foolish falsehood.

"Austin," she said, "let me get to heaven my own way. Don't talk of this again. If you were sick, or in prison, would I not visit you?"

He comforted her, and said no more about it, and indeed, after a few days, did not think very much; for there was much to think about elsewhere, of a far different sort.

The tiresome iteration of the Corn-law debate began, as time went on, to be relieved by fiercer and fiercer personalities. Honourable members were saying things to one another, such as they had not said since 1831, and have not said since. In the House it was bad enough, but in the clubs it was

worse, by all accounts. Honourable and gallant Members at the Carlton, were threatening to pitch Right Honourable Members and future Chancellors of Exchequer out of window, in the direction of the Reform Club. "Or did so, in at least one instance," as Mr. C—— might say, in hedging a general statement of this kind, and might also continue, "future Exchequer Chancellor *not* pitched out of window after all. Honourable major, threatening that same, hereafter apologising with a certain leonine simplicity and honesty, not without grandeur. On which occasion, also, we find that leonine major savagely, and with feline snarl (yar-r-r! To thy Cairn, Vermin, lest a worse thing befall thee!) turning on a certain too eager jackal of his, a Captain Hertford. Jackal apparently (judging from infinite annual register, and newspaper-file crudities) without even the jackal-merit of cunning. Only merit, apparently, having teeth, and biting nobler than he. But a poor thing in jackals, now happily passed away into limbo, for evermore let us hope."

To add to the confusion, in this same pleasant month of May, an opinion began to obtain, among those who were in the same position, of knowing but little about the matter, but of talking a great deal:

that although the bill was safe enough in the Commons, it was not safe in the Lords. This caused a great deal of fidgety irritation, and Lord Charles Barty went about (to use a trope) with a pan of burning charcoal on his head, threatening utter annihilation to his order, should they impudently dare to follow their own convictions.

In the midst of it all, Mr. Smith O'Brien, driven to the verge of madness at not making a sensation equal to his merits (O'Connell extinguished a year since in a blaze of high-handed justice, and no successor of sufficient mendacity and talent appearing), conceived the noble idea of refusing to sit on Saxon railway-committees, and got himself shut up, in more ways than one, if the reader will forgive a piece of harmless slang. He was rewarded for his heroism, by appearing the next week in perhaps the best caricature in *Punch*—"The Naughty Boy who didn't care."

Altogether, in this month of May, people were getting unwisely excited about this Corn-bill, and non-electors began to stand about at street-corners and discuss it in a loud voice: which is an ugly symptom, in a close-packed city of two millions, the most open part of it, a mere Saint Antoine, *not* cut up east, west, north, and south by the boulevards of

a paternal Government, anxious to remain a Government. People were getting very much excited in the House and out of the House; and what would have happened in 1848 if the Lords had thrown out the Bill, we are almost afraid to think.

In the middle of all this, Lord George Bentinck got up and made, what we must all, I think, confess, a most terribly telling speech against Sir Robert Peel. He unluckily tried his hand on a proposition about the admission of oats, showing a degree of ignorance or carelessness almost incredible in a man aspiring to lead a party. Mr. Goulburn went about with him amidst the laughter of the House. In the discussion which ensued, Captain Hertford spoke for a few minutes, and succeeded in making Lord George's case worse than before. The instant he sat down Lord Charles Barty was on his legs.

It is possible that the House was relieved to find the quarrel transferred to two such insignificant members as Captain Hertford and Lord Charles Barty. At all events, they appeared so. Lord Charles did not speak for more than five minutes; he did not speak well; he did not speak like himself. His heart was so full of furious animosity against this man Hertford, that he said things he ought not

to have said. He insulted Captain Hertford, and there were cries of order. He had gone too far, when he sat down again beside Mr. Huddersfield the lawyer, radical member for a city in the West; that gentleman said to him, "You have gone too far, Barty. That man will have you out."

But Captain Hertford took no notice of it. People were saying all sorts of things about one another just then. Lord Charles had not said anything about Captain Hertford, *much* worse than what Mr. Disraeli had said of Sir Robert.

Austin had that evening led Lord Edward Barty up into the gallery, and they two had heard it all. When the debate was over, and they were waiting for Lord Charles in the old place under the end of Henry VII.'s chapel, Lord Edward said—

"Austin, Charles has insulted that man. He will have a message to-morrow morning."

Austin said he hoped not. No message came. And then poor blind Lord Edward got an idea into his darkened head, which he acted on, the full effect of which we shall see.

We are obliged, however, to follow Captain Hertford on his way home this evening. We wish we could take the reader home in better company.

If any one had been able to see in the moonlight the vindictive scowl that was on his coarse face, they would have augured ill for any one who should venture to thrust his company on the Captain in an obtrusive manner that night. A handsome young Frenchman, either not knowing or not caring what his state of mind might be; came up, took him by the arm, and burst into the most exaggerated form of French laughter.

"Ha! ha! but Milor used you sadly, my dear friend. By the prophet, but he laughed at the most sacred beard of my own Hertford. Come, let us shoot him. How say you, is Milor to be kill?"

Captain Hertford showed no outward irritation at this man's presence or manner. He answered quietly enough.

"Milor may go hang, rot, anything he likes, for the present, my friend. Commilfaut, where have you sprung from?"

"From the gallery of the imperial Parliament of Great Britain, where I have been listening to the burning, furious, and yet lucid eloquence of my friend Hertford on ze oat. 'Twas a droll subject, but 'nihil tetigit quod non ornavit,' like Doctor Goldsmiſs in the *triste* old Abbey."

"Don't be a fool, Commilfaut."

"I will not when I am dead and buried, perhaps. Till then fool I shall always be, dear Captain. Come and play the billiard—one game—by dam! Only one game."

After a few moments' consideration, Captain Hertford said yes, and they went towards a billiard-room near the bridge, which was still open, at all events to the Captain.

The billiard-marker was a rather gentlemanly-looking young man, though with a decidedly dissipated air about him. Some day, some wise man will write the lives of eminent billiard-markers. It ought to be a very interesting book, for the lives of most of them have been singularly erratic and tragical.

They began playing, and talked about indifferent matters in English; but after a time Monsieur De Commilfaut having made a hit, turned to the marker and said in French: "That was a good stroke, was it not?"

The marker looked stupidly at him and said, "I beg your pardon, sir?" M. de Commilfaut repeated the question, and the marker turned with a puzzled air to Captain Hertford for explanation.

"The man don't understand French, don't you see," growled the captain; "go on."

"I perceive that the pig-headed brigand does not, as you remark, understand the language of Europe; which is a charming discovery, as we can now discuss a few little matters, which I would be glad to have discussed." This was said in French, and from this time the conversation was carried on in French, a language which Captain Hertford spoke like his mother tongue.


"And how is my sweet cousin?" said De Commilfaut.

"She is a fool," said Captain Hertford sulkily.

"She is. She don't appreciate me. Has, in fact, refused me an absurdly small loan of nine thousand francs. Eleanor Hilton is a young lady of incorrigibly bad taste. She prefers, for instance, you to me. Can anything be worse taste, my captain?"

"Nothing, I suppose," said the Captain, wincing. "Women are strange creatures; they will sometimes like a man better than a monkey."

The Frenchman was so delighted with this elegant sally of the Captain, that he went into the wildest fit of laughter. He gave his cue to the stupid marker,



sat on a bench, and laughed till he cried. After a time he took his cue again in a feeble manner, but before he could strike the ball the fit came on again, and he laughed till he cried again; by degrees he became quieter, and went on with his game.

“ But I am glad to hear, my little pig—if, as you say in your Parliament, you will allow me to call you so—that you are at the best with this infinitely rich, espiègle, but very obstinate little cousin of mine, Eleanor Hilton; and for this reason among others, that since she has refused me (by the mouth of an aged mountebank, whose ears should be served up *au gratin* at the devil’s next dinner party) this trifling loan, I am at this moment ‘*in nubibus*,’ which means under ze cloud, unclassical cabbage!”

At this moment the marker broke out into a short laugh, and they both quickly turned on him. The marker explained.

“ The French gentleman has played your ball, sir. I always notice that too much talk don’t do at billiards any more than at whist.”

The mistake was rectified, and they resumed the game and the conversation still in French.

“ I suppose,” said Captain Hertford, “ that you are going to mention my little debt to you?”

"His little debt! Holy grey! the wealth of these islanders! Forty thousand francs a little debt!"

"I don't call it a little debt! It is mode of speech," said Captain Hertford. "You cannot get blood out of a stone, though, my friend."

"Alas, no! I know it. For this reason I am overwhelmed with joy to hear that you are at best with our determined little cousin; that you are about marrying her, and about paying me my poor forty thousand francs."

"You will have your money if you wait," said Captain Hertford, sulkily. "I shall certainly marry her, and you will be paid in good time."

"I am sure, dear Captain. She has, then, thrown overboard this handsome young scoundrel—this Elliot?"

"No, she has not."

"I shall watch your play, then, with the greater anxiety. I have seen him—he is amazingly handsome—and I have seen them together. I followed her when she was leading a blind Milor, a Sir Edward, and she met him—this Elliot—and I watched her; and I have had my good fortunes like another, and I can see. And she loves him."

"I am quite aware of it," said Captain Hertford.

"And what are you going to do?"

"You asked me to-night," replied the Captain, "why I did not take a shot at Lord Charles Barty, for his cursed insolence in the House. I'll tell you why. If I had out Lord Charles Barty, and even hit him, it would necessitate a slight seclusion abroad, and the leaving the field in the hands of the enemy. I am waiting for an opportunity of insulting this fellow Elliot, and killing him."

"Recommending yourself to my little cousin's good graces by killing her lover," said the Frenchman. "Well, I have heard of that succeeding. But that course also, my friend, will involve a temporary seclusion in the centre of European thought and intellect, Paris; and our cousin will be left to lead about the blind Milor, and will, as I hear, probably take the veil, which will be the devil itself."

"Not at all," said Captain Hertford. "If she was got away from Elliot and his confederate, Lord Charles Barty (who would, too, were he his second, have to retire also), her aunt could bring her abroad, and we might do anything with her. Marker, go and fetch me some soda-water and brandy."

The marker departed.

"Do you suspect he understands French, then?" said Commilfaut.

"No; but one can't be too cautious. If that girl refuses to marry me, I have a secret of hers which is worth three thousand a-year to me."

"And what is that?"

"Dear friend," said Captain Hertford, "would it be a secret if I told it you?"

"Why no," said the good-natured rascal of a Frenchman, laughing, "only remember my forty thousand francs, or I will force you to challenge me, and choose swords, old cabbage."

And so these worthies departed, infinitely satisfied. But their interview compels me to call attention to a little story which I have to tell. And which I will tell as dramatically as I can, so that it may not be dull.

This billiard-room, where these two worthies had just held their villanous conversation, was at that time the nearest billiard-room to the House of Commons.

Austin Elliot was exceedingly fond of two things. The one of hearing debates in the houses, the other of playing billiards. When waiting for a debate to come on, what more natural than that he should

beguile the time with a game of billiards? Still more natural that he should play his billiards at the house nearest handy, so as to run off at any time. More natural yet, that he should, with his hearty manner and open hand, get well known there, say *very* well known to the proprietor Perkins.

At this point in our narrative, we must go back to a period ten years antecedent, and begin all over again.

When Austin and Lord Charles were at Eton, there had been an agreeable plucky boy there, whom they both knew, by name Mapleton. This boy had gone to Brasenose, Oxford, and from thence to the dogs: horribly in debt, disappearing into outer darkness; having, in fact, in his wanderings, rambled into that land in which policemen and low persons of that kind have power. It was a sad business—the only thing to do was to forget that such a lad ever lived.

But, about six months before this time, Austin had received a letter from this lad Mapleton, out of the Queen's Bench, praying for help for the sake of old acquaintance; and Austin had gone away to him at once, with his good heart full of old school recollections, steadily ignoring all later passages in

this lad's life. Only reflecting that he might be saved yet.

He heard the young man, Mapleton's story, he paid the debt for which he was in prison, and both he and Lord Charles promised that if he should deserve it they would help him up the ladder again.

At this time it happened that the then billiard-marker at Perkins' forged Perkins' name for 96*l.* 10*s.*, and got the money. He found this so pleasant, it being vacation time, and billiards slack, that he begun to steal the billiard balls by twos and threes, and sell them in Greek Street, Soho. This thriving also, and the 96*l.* being capital untouched, he stole Perkins' cash-box, and absconded. But, remembering that there was one more set of new balls left, he, so to speak, *un-absconded* again, and came back to fetch them. But the measure of his sins being full, it fell out that Perkins met him on the stairs and essayed to arrest him. They fell downstairs together, Perkins cut his head open against the umbrella-stand, and the marker would have escaped, had not Mrs. Perkins rushed out of the parlour, stunned him with the hearth-broom, and got in the police. After this there was no marker at Perkins' but Perkins himself; who pathetically told Austin and Lord Charles, that his

tobacco business was going to the very deuce for want of a billiard-marker, and they both cried out, "Mapleton," and Mapleton came, and stole no cash-boxes; but passed on into higher walks in life after a time.

And this was the young marker who marked for Captain Hertford and M. de Commilfaut, the night they had their important conversation. Add to this that, in consequence of five years' Continental experience, more or less disreputable, he understood French better than Captain Hertford, and from old Eton recollections, knew a little more Latin than M. de Commilfaut; which made him nearly betray himself, at the Frenchman's new construction of *in nubibus*.

No wonder, then, that he, only now the poor ghost of what he might have been, or what he might be yet, but with his poor weak heart full of gratitude, took his post in front of Cheshire House, very early next morning.

By and by the Duke came out, rosy and fresh, eager to get some pure air before the smoke came down; to take his two turns round the square, and his look in at his stables, and wish to goodness he was back at Esham, among his beasts. Next came

Lord Edward, blindly staring, with his hand on his valet's shoulder, away to the north-east for prayers, at Margaret Street. Lastly, Lord Charles, in white trousers, tall, handsome, and gay, going one knows not whither; ready in his happy, youthful vitality, to go anywhere where a gentleman might. Him the poor billiard-marker stopped, and into his attentive ear poured all he could remember of the last night's conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL he could remember. It amounted to this—as far as Lord Charles could understand it—that this billiard-marker had heard Captain Hertford say that he intended to provoke Austin and shoot him; and that he (the Captain) was assured that Eleanor would marry him, as soon as that was accomplished. With all the poor fellow's eager honesty, he made a game of "Russian scandal" of his information after all.

The marker and Lord Charles Barty played at Russian scandal with a vengeance. Lord Charles thought that if he were to tell Austin of it first hand, there would be a furious outbreak on Austin's part, and that there would be a duel, in which, as a matter of course, Austin would be shot stone dead by Captain Hertford. So he went up and waited outside of

the chapel till his blind brother came out, and told him (with Russian scandal variations), and they both agreed that Lord Edward should tell the story to Austin, softening it in every way ; just to put him on his guard against quarrelling with Captain Hertford, until there had been a grand consultation as to what the three friends were to do.

Blind Lord Edward performed his commission (in the Russian scandal way); he contrived to make Austin understand, that Captain Hertford had in a public billiard-room, in the presence of witnesses, asserted that he was engaged to Eleanor, and also, that he was only waiting for an opportunity to pick a quarrel with Austin, and shoot him.

About the first part of this communication Austin laughed heartily ; about the second he looked very grave.

"Edward Barty," he said, "surely *you* do not distrust Eleanor?"

"I would answer for her with my life," said the blind man.

"And I," said Austin. "This Hertford is a creature of hers. She paid his election bills. He knows something which she wishes to have hidden from me. That is the reason of their familiarity. I

will challenge her about it, and have it explained. But I know her well enough to know that the idea of her marrying him is preposterous, mad, not to be entertained by a sane man. She hates him. She knows and despises him as well as we do. I am surprised that you should have even repeated such a report to me."

"Dear Austin," said Lord Edward, "we are all agreed about that part of the matter; no one is anxious about that; it is about you that we are anxious. I have no doubt but that Captain Hertford believes that if he could get you out of the way, and get Aunt Maria to take her abroad, that he would have his way. He believes that we know Eleanor too well. But, old boy," continued Lord Edward, feeling out into his eternal darkness for Austin's well-loved face, "If the dog shot you, in pursuing his villanous plan, what would there be left for the rest of us but misery and remorse, and impatient waiting for death, that we might feel your dear hands again?"

There was no one to see the expression on Austin's face now—an expression seen by Captain Hertford two years ago on that face at Ty'n-y-Rhaiadr, and to be seen by the worthy Captain once more—an ex-

pression of mingled fury and fear. He burst out with a snarl—

“Damn him! Is he the only man who can shoot with a pistol? What sort of country is this we live in, that a dog like that, by possessing a certain dexterity—a dexterity which a Sikh Soubadhar, or a French chevalier d’industrie, could communicate to my own groom—should hold the happiness of us all in his hand like this? By God, Edward, it is shameful! Nothing to be said, nothing to be done, but by the grace of this low blackleg, who has the one accomplishment of hitting a man at twelve paces with a pistol ball!”

“It is an inevitable evil, Austin.”

“It is not inevitable. The land is groaning under the system of the duel, and the land will be rid of it. Curse on the fool who invented it, and a curse on all fools who follow it. Therefore, Edward, a curse on myself; for let him beware, I will play Best to his Camelford—mark me, I will!”

“I only know this,” said Lord Edward, “that I will not have it; you shall not go out with that man. I will take measures—”

“Your measures, my poor Eddy,” said Austin, “would only necessitate my blowing my own brains

out instead of his. Remember, that any step taken to prevent a meeting between this man and me, after what has passed, can only end in utter irretrievable ruin to me."

"I know! I know! alas how well! But you will be careful, Austin."

"I will not go within a hundred yards of the man," said Austin, "my anger is over in that last burst. If you could see my face, you would know it."

At this time they were walking arm-in-arm round the garden in Grosvenor Square.

"See your face!" said Lord Edward, "aye, I wish I could see your face. Does it seem strange to you, to know a man who does not know what seeing means? I was born blind, you know, and ever since I could think I have tried to compare the things I love. They have told me that you were beautiful, and I have tried to realize your face. Sometimes I have thought that it was like the scent of violets, sometimes like the noise I hear on the terrace at Esham on a summer evening, when the children are playing on the village green down below; and sometimes when you and Charles get wild over your politics, that it is like the mad scream of Ernst's fiddle, when he makes all the muscles of your back

tingle, and the nerves about your face quiver again. What a fool you would be, if you were blind, Austin."

So Captain Hertford, by such talk as this, was removed millions of miles from Austin's consideration. But when his clothes were off and he was horizontal in bed, the inexorable Captain reappeared. And Robin, the dog, who slept with Austin, got impressions, whether of thieves or fire I know not, which made him sit up till morn, and pant; for which he got his reward from the boot-rack at various times in the night; but still, after divers more or less dexterous retreats from flying boots, he sat up and panted conscientiously until morning dawned.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT was to be done? Lord Charles, his brother, and Austin all consulted, and the answer was, "Nothing as yet." What *could* be done? The very slightest motion on their part would bring on the very meeting they dreaded; unless they resorted to civil protection, in which case there would be absolutely nothing to be done, according to their code, but for Austin to blow his brains out.

Poor Lord Edward, sitting in eternal darkness, not being able to know men's faces and what expression accompanied such and such words, formed a project which no one but a blind man or a madman would have formed. His project was this, to speak to Captain Hertford himself. He had been in Captain Hertford's company three or four times, and always when Eleanor was present. He had never seen his

cruel, gluttonous face, and he had only heard his voice; and the Captain's voice, in the presence of Eleanor, his benefactress, was not so unpleasant. It was subdued to a sulky, respectful sort of growl. And judging from his voice alone, and, pluming himself on his shrewdness, Lord Edward came to the conclusion that he was not quite so bad as the others wanted to make him out; that, at all events, he would try what could be done with him. I must tell you how he fared.

Captain Hertford's plan of operations just at this time was most certainly nearly the same as that which he unfolded to the Frenchman at the billiard-table. But we must remember that he was a *stupid* man, whose cunning was of a very low order. He had, as he most truly said, a secret of Eleanor's by which he might extort money from her; but when that secret was known to Austin, as he felt sure it would be on the very day of their marriage, he had cunning enough to know, that it would be worth much less in Austin's hands than in hers. Moreover, were Austin out of the way, and he safe abroad, he felt sure that Aunt Maria had still power enough to scold Eleanor into going abroad, in which case he hoped to get her to consent to marry him.

Here is where the man's low cunning failed him utterly. Eleanor had always been so gentle and so kind to him, for the sake of what he had done for her and for the power that he still held in his hands ; that the fool never dreamed that she loathed his presence, and that she hated the day when she first saw him.

Eleanor, in addition to her own terrible domestic troubles—tangible every-day troubles—which she and her faithful old footman bore patiently together : had got, from her native shrewdness, a terror lest Captain Hertford should conceive the plan of doing exactly what he was thinking of doing now—involving Austin in a quarrel, killing him, and getting her abroad, under the sole protection of her aunt, whose madness was developing day by day.

That is what was the matter with Aunt Maria. She was getting mad. Her fierce fits of scolding were becoming fiercer, and sometimes her maid would come up terrified into Eleanor's room in the dead of night, and they two would listen to the dreadful old woman scolding away to herself below, as if her maid was present.

Poor Eleanor did not know which way to turn among all these terrible apprehensions. But she made

a solemn vow to herself,—that if Austin were killed and she forced abroad, that she would embrace the Popish faith, and claim the protection of the good Archbishop of Paris, whom she knew.

So that as Captain Hertford's scheme stood at present, she would have utterly wrecked it. But Lord Edward Barty changed the Captain's scheme, and it was never put in execution. Captain Hertford formed another one, and we shall see how that succeeded.

One pleasant morning in this May month, date I should say about the 12th, Eleanor and the worthy Captain sat together in Eleanor's drawing-room in Wilton Crescent. They were quite silent. Some commonplaces had passed, Hertford had brought her some Cape jessamine, and she had thanked him, and relapsed into silence, wondering whether he had anything to say ; rather wishing he would go, but on the whole taking rather more notice of Robin, who had come to her on a furtive visit, than of the honourable and gallant gentleman.

Her regular, rather small features, had become somewhat pinched and worn lately, and her air was a little languid. Her eyes were as brilliant as ever, but her mouth was more closely set ; and altogether

her face was more marked, and she looked older. She had had not very much of artificial education, but she had inherited a certain grace of posture from her mother, and I know not how many grandmothers and great-grandmothers. Every attitude which she put herself into was graceful. Her present one was very so, it was the one in which one most commonly saw her: sitting in perfect repose, with her hands folded on her lap, without one fold in her drapery awry or out of place. She had the art of sitting absolutely still for any length of time with the most perfect grace; and that is a most difficult and rare art, and also a most useful one.

It puzzled Hertford on this occasion. He had something to say to her, but he was a very stupid man, and he never could start a subject of conversation without assistance. On this occasion he got none; judging from appearances, and knowing her as well as he did, there did not appear the slightest reason why Eleanor should not sit in that posture, with her hands folded in her lap, in that exasperating manner, for the next two hours. The Captain got angry, and at last he said,—“I beg your pardon, Miss Hilton.”

Eleanor merely turned her head, and looked at him

with an expression of languid curiosity. She changed her attitude, but it was only more graceful than before. Hertford had to go on—

“There is a knock at the door. I am glad of it, for it will cut me short. I have to thank you for your extraordinary generosity about my election business. I am grateful, I assure you.”

“My dear Captain Hertford,” she said quietly, “no one could have deserved my assistance more than yourself. I will always be your friend, as long as you deserve it.”

The door was opened, and James snarled out,—

“Lord Eddard and Lord Chawls. That gal Susan have dropped my best cut water-jug and broke it. She were a washing on it at the scullery sink, and she let go on it, and down it come. Says she’s all of a tremble ’cause she dreamt last night, as the carpenter she keeps company with in the country, cut her throat with a bevilling-plane, and buried her body in a old saw-pit. Drat her, I wish he had.” And having said this, he departed, and banged the door behind him, while Eleanor’s face was lit up with a smile.

On seeing Hertford, Lord Charles paused for an instant, and consequently Lord Edward, who had his

hand on his brother's neck, and was being led by him, paused too. A singular pair. Both very handsome, singularly alike in feature, dressed similarly from top to toe ; and yet with such a strange difference between them. Charles had a pair of bright, honest blue eyes—Edward was stone-blind. Looking at Lord Charles first, and then at his brother, had the same effect as if you looked at the well-known face of a dear friend, and immediately after at a sightless, staring, marble bust of him.

“Miss Hilton,” said Lord Charles, “I have piloted Eddy here ; he says you will take him to church. Do, that's a dear soul, for I must go. Good-bye.”

Hertford had risen too, and when Lord Charles was gone, looked towards the door ; Eleanor said, —“Captain Hertford, would you mind stopping—I have something to say to you?” And on this the Captain sat down again.

The bell was even now ringing for church, and Eleanor must hurry away, and put on her bonnet ; and so Lord Edward was left alone with Captain Hertford, and Hertford sat and stared at the blind man, who groped his way to the piano, and began softly playing snatches of sacred music. He had never been introduced to Captain Hertford. There was no

reason why Captain Hertford should speak to the brother of the confounded puppy who had insulted him, and so he sat and stared at those sightless eyes.

Those sightless eyes ! The darkened windows of a house in which sight lies dead, shrouded in grave-clothes of strange misconceptions, until the dawn of the Resurrection shall begin to gleam in the East, and the dead shall rise upon their feet. The eyes of the blind are more awful to look at than the eyes of the dead.

Yes, more awful. The eyes of the dead have looked, (at one time), upon the earth in which their time of probation has been passed, and their eyes have carried the outward semblance of their fellow men, into their soul. But the blank staring eyes of those who have been born blind, have looked on nought but darkness from the beginning : and the soul imprisoned behind them, has only groped about in the night of its living tomb ; and has learnt to love only by the sense of hearing and touch.

What a strange riddle the earth must be to a man born blind. We all know of the blind man, who thought that red was like the sound of a trumpet ; and we remember it, because it was, in some sort, a

good guess. But think what a puzzle the whole world must be to a man in this state. Try to remember if you have ever awaked at night, in pitch darkness; and how the nibbling of a mouse was to you the stealthy working of the burglar's centre-bit; and the rustle of a few withered leaves in the night wind, became the fierce crackle of burning beams.

Try to think of a man in a chronic state of misconception, and do not blame Lord Edward Barty for what he did.

Living in a very small circle, under his terrible affliction, with few hopes, few amusements; his source of information, the being read to by his valet—he, labouring under the consciousness of a want of information, avoided conversation and society. By this means he had not got the great lesson which society teaches,—knowledge of the value of words; and so—

And so—after playing at the piano for a time, he stood up. Captain Hertford sat at the other end of the room, and silently watched him.

“What a devilish curious thing,” thought Captain Hertford, “to be always in the dark, like that fellow.”

Lord Edward began to feel over the nearest table to him, with his fingers, as though looking for some-

thing. Captain Hertford was right. There was something very strange and weird in watching the long fingers wandering about among the china and bijouterie, or what not, which lay on the various tables; something very strange in that beautiful darkened face; which, with an instinct, the depth of which no man can fathom, was always turned towards those white hands, which its eyes had never seen; and never would see.

“It is uncommon curious to think of,” thought the Captain, “but that fellow has never seen any other fellow in his whole life. There is something very horrid about it.”

There was. Lord Edward was feeling his way softly round the table, towards Captain Hertford, in sightless silence, getting nearer and nearer every instant with his long thin fingers; it *was* very horrid. Hertford held his breath, and felt a strange creeping come over him. One of his big hands was on the table, and Lord Edward’s long hands were coming slowly towards it, feeling their way through the books, and press-papiers, and paper-knives,—and yet Captain Hertford kept his hand still on the table; there was a kind of fascination about the blind man’s eyes.

At last, Lord Edward touched his hand, he took it up in his, and Hertford did not resist. Lord Edward spoke, and Captain Hertford listened, listened to strange words, words which at first made him sit dumb with terror, brave man as he was.

"Feeling about in the everlasting darkness which surrounds me," said Lord Edward, "I have come across the hand of a man. It is a hand which has held a sword, and used that sword at the gates of death. It is the hand of a brave man. And yet that hand will soon be slippery with innocent blood. It will be the hand of a murderer soon!"

Before Captain Hertford had made up his mind whether or no the man who was talking was a madman, as well as blind, the other went on.

"Captain Hertford! I cannot prevent you killing Austin Elliot. It were almost better that he should be dead, than that he, with his feelings of honour, should live on, if I were to interfere and prevent you fighting him. I do not speak of him. I speak of yourself. I know that you have laid a plot to assassinate him. Every detail of your plot is known to me. That rascally gambling cousin of Eleanor's, that Commilfaut, might be brought into court to-morrow to convict you of a conspiracy. You are

quite in my hands if anything should happen to Austin; but I am held down from taking steps to save him, for the reasons I have mentioned. I only tell you this, that if anything does happen to him, nothing shall save you. If you were ever on any provocation to fight him after this, nothing could save you. I am in possession of your whole scheme, Hertford; now what will you do?"

It seemed, from the expression of the Captain's face, had any one seen it, that what he would do, would be to take Lord Edward by the throat, and beat his brains out against the wall. All he said was, "Wait, my lord—wait, will you? You are presuming very considerably on your infirmity."

"Not I. I am quite without fear, I assure you. If my life would save Austin's I would gladly give it. I will wait. Think for a little, Captain Hertford, and tell me what you mean to do."

Captain Hertford saw quickly that he was in a scrape. That if they had got hold of his conversation with Commilfaut, it would be impossible for him to fight Austin, without incurring far more serious penalties than those consequent on an ordinary duel. He felt, in one instant, that his plan of having Austin out and shooting him, was gone to

the winds. He gave it up. Austin was safe from that moment, *if he had sense to stay in England.*

But Lord Edward's words, coming as they did upon the strange fit of superstitious terror, arising from the fact of his creeping towards him in that strange, silent way; had raised a very mad devil in him. It is a mere silly truism, a thing hardly worth repeating to an intelligent person, that bad people are never so cruelly vindictive, as when they are recovering from a fit of terror. He would have liked to revenge himself on Lord Edward, but that was impossible. But——

But there was Lord Edward's brother. He could hit him hard there. They talked of enforcing the laws against duelling, but was not P—— acquitted? They would not dare to do more than they ordinarily did on such occasions, if he had out Lord Charles Barty. The young prig who had insulted him in the House, till even the Whigs called order. Now he rapidly began to reflect, now that his rage was turned that way, that his reputation would be a ragged one if he did not. It would be a political duel. He had precedent here. Canning and Londonderry; Wellington and Winchelsea. Yes,

that handsome young dandy should be scapegoat. He had brought it on himself.

And also Austin would have to go abroad, if anything happened. And Messieurs the French Officers were dexterous, and, yes, on the first blush of it, it would do. So he spoke.

"Lord Edward."

"I listen."

"I will take an oath to you. Austin Elliot shall, if he be so minded, spit in my face, and I will not go out with him, unless he comes abroad. Will that content you?"

"I always said," said Lord Edward, "that you were not a bad man. I thank God I am right. Let me call you my friend, Captain."

"No, I will not do that. You have insulted me, and in a cowardly way, because you knew I could not resent it. I will not meddle with you. You have a shrewd tongue, Lord Edward."

And before they had time to say anything more, unconscious Eleanor came in ready for church, and led off Lord Edward. They went to church, and sat like two stone angels through it all, until some one, who had come up from Oxford, played out, in a triumphant hurling storm of sound; and, when

the last echo had done humming in the roof, they waited together at the bottom of the organ-loft stairs, till they heard the well-known sound of his wooden leg stumping down; and, after an affectionate greeting, carried him off to lunch at Eleanor's.

And this was the result of Lord Edward's interview with Captain Hertford.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a wild week this which followed. The "non-electors," who had begun by merely sneering at Peel's tergiversation, and rather laughing at the Bill; now had got earnest about it, in one way or another, and were showing a slight tendency to congregate. The more intelligent among them had found out, or had thought they had found out, what the intention of the Bill was. The great fact that the duty was to be reduced at once from sixteen to four shillings, was enough to excite them somewhat, for bread was dear. Their excitement was over pretty much, on Saturday morning when the Bill was passed, though, as far as this story is concerned, the Corn-bill was never passed at all. It *was* read a third time at four on Saturday morning, but, before we come to

that period, we shall not be thinking much about corn bills.

Austin was in a very vexed and excited state that week, and he said it was the Bill; nay, more, he actually believed it was the Bill, with which he had nothing whatever to do, not even having a vote for Westminster. He was excited and angry about Captain Hertford.

There was no doubt about one thing, according to the code of honour of those times. Austin had heard of threats uttered against him by a bully and an enemy, *and had taken no notice of them.*

This consideration was driving him mad all that week. He felt like a guilty man. What would the world say if they knew all? If they knew that he was in possession of Captain Hertford's language about him, and knew that he had not noticed it. It was terrible.

"What would the world say if it knew all?" Unluckily the world knew a little too much; and, as to what it would say, Austin found *that* out on Thursday.

Lord Charles was in his rooms with him in the afternoon, and making or trying to make Robin sit up in a corner and hold a pipe in his mouth. His

father had given his sister Minny a dog on her birthday, a spaniel dog, with long drooping ears on each side, like the speaker's wig, which would sit up and smoke a pencil-case ; and so, why should not Austin's dog? Which circumstance shows that this desperate young Jacobin thought of something else beside the salvation of his country.

Austin was very silent and anxious. Whatever he thought about, the question always came back. What would they think if they knew?

Presently a man came in ; an old friend ; a very tall, awkward man ; a man who at Eton had been a long shambling lad, whose shoes were always coming off, and who never could be taught to swim, or to row, or to do anything in that line, except get in the way. A fellow who was always getting his eye blacked at cricket, and his ankle sprained at foot-ball. A fellow who was always top of his form, and was always up half the night doing other lads' impositions (or whatever they call those inflections at Eton). A fellow who was always getting into trouble for some one else ; who would have died sooner than betray another boy. Who, as a boy, had been beloved, revered, and bullied by everyone who knew him ; a maker-up of quarrels ; a

pleader at school with masters, at the University with dons ; a high-hearted, noble creature, whose shoes were never tied, whose hair was always tangled, whose coat was never brushed, who went on till he developed into one of the shrewdest and most clear-headed lawyers of the day. Early in his career he had been christened "Daddy," which name always stuck to him, and will stick to him, even if he gets on the bench.

He had been to the United University Club, and had heard conversation there which made him go and seek Lord Charles. He had found Lord Edward, and having told him what was the matter, had heard from him of his last conversation with Captain Hertford. He had at once determined to speak to Austin himself. Also, hearing of what passed on that occasion, he thought that Austin was perfectly safe, or he would have cut his tongue out sooner than say what he did.

"Austin, I have been at the Club. Charles Barty, attend to me, and leave that dog alone. They have been talking of you there."

"Aye!" said Austin.

"Yes; a certain blackleg bully has been taking your name in vain; and they were wondering why

you have not noticed it. I, as a man of peace; a man who, if need were, would make no more of falling on this man Hertford, and beating him myself, sooner than that anything should happen to you; I, even I, think that you ought to notice it. Go about with this fellow, in some public place, and bring him to account. If I did not *know* that he will not take it up, but will put his tail between his legs, for uncommonly good reasons, I would not give this advice; you know I would not. Go about with him, and force him to deny what he has said. I will go bail that nothing follows."

So sadly right, so sadly wrong.

"What has he been saying?" said Austin, quietly.

"Well go down to the Club and ask the men there. I will not tell you. Well, he has been coupling his own name and Miss Hilton's."

"Indeed!" said Austin.

"Yes, old boy, and you should contradict him, if only for her sake. Don't go too far. Send him quietly to his kennel, and he will go. If he don't, *send him to me*. I will not have you talked of by a fellow like that. Now, good-bye, go to the Club."

And so he went. Lord Charles rose, and began

walking up and down the room, looking very grave, as soon as they were alone.

And Austin said "Well!"

Lord Charles said, "Well, Austin."

"There is no doubt about it now, I think you will allow."

"I am afraid not. I am afraid you *must* do it. God help us. All this that Daddy says about his not having you out, may be true, or may be moonshine. Whichever it is, you must tax him with what he has said. You may have to go out with him. However; it will be time enough to think of that, when he asks you : which Daddy says he won't."

"I don't care which way it goes now. I am perfectly happy again," said Austin. "Charles, for the last day I have felt like a thief; now, that I am committed to the adventure, I am myself again. I ought to have been committed to it two days ago. It is not too late to remedy that. Let us go down to the Club, and talk as loud of Hertford as he has talked of me. My reputation will be right again in ten minutes. Wait for me till I brush my hair."

When Lord Charles was left alone, he sat for a few minutes, with his hand on Robin's neck. And

then he bent down his head on the table, and prayed."

What strange kind of prayer was that? Was it a prayer for guidance? No. It must have been a prayer for mercy and forgiveness. For he had made the resolution to watch Austin and Captain Hertford, lest they should come together; to insult Captain Hertford himself, and go out with him; and to save Austin at the sacrifice of his own life.

Why? Ah! that is hard to answer. Some natures, however darkened with regard to a higher system of morality, have in them a kind of dull, blind chivalry, which will lead them to all lengths; and, at five-and-twenty, if we can remember so long ago, friendships are very warm. Why is Bill led out of the dock to ten years' penal servitude, because he won't turn evidence against Tom? Explain me the one thing, and I will explain you the other. I take it that Bill and Lord Charles Barty act from much the same motives, only that Bill would not have wilfully compassed the death of a fellow-creature. Lord Charles Barty's life is a more graceful one to write about than Bill's, with his beer and his skittles, and his vague notion that the policeman, protector of society, is also the enemy of mankind. But, ah!

what a poor fellow would he be who would not acknowledge that both are capable of most chivalrous devotion.

Perhaps the advantage lies with Lord Charles in this ; that he would actually go to death for his friend ; whereas poor Bill, were it a capital matter, would, after standing all day in the hot court, staring with eager eyes, hot lips, and lowering face at the counsel for the prosecution ; and with the same hot lips, but with more eager eyes at his own counsel,—after all this, I say, would, in the end, not being held up by a certain something which some call chivalry ; give way and tell the truth for the sake of dear life : and would afterwards go away a free man and take to drinking, and drown himself ultimately in the Regent's Canal, as the only solution : which we can only hope he will not find to be an eminently unsatisfactory one.

Lord Charles's resolution was taken, and when Austin had brushed his hair and had come back, Austin only saw that he looked grave, and wished that he had looked gayer.

"Come, cheer up, Charles," said Austin, "I am not dead yet. Faithless friend, you ought to keep up my spirits."

Lord Charles smiled, but did not laugh.

"I know why you can't laugh, old fellow," said Austin. "Do you think I could laugh if I was going out with you? Come on, let us go to the Club and kick up the preliminary row."

So they went. At the club, among the old University set, such few of them who happened to be there, Austin expressed his intention of morally or physically pulling Captain Hertford's nose to-morrow, which was quite satisfactory. Lord Charles slipped away and went to Captain Hertford's lodgings in Pall Mall.

An obtuse maid, being inquired of, represented that the Captain was not at home, that he had gone out of town that afternoon; that he had gone to Malta on business, by the two o'clock train, but would be back to dinner the next day at five. This being, on the face of it, an impossibility, in the present imperfect state of our international communication; it became necessary to call in the Captain's landlord Runciman. The King of Bootmakers deposed that the Captain had been down to Malsam, the town he represented, to see if the other member, Mr. Nogo (C), would be well enough to come up and vote; and that, also, the Captain would most certainly be back late the same night, and that the maid's story

about his coming back the next day at five, was a fiction.

The next morning Lord Charles, never for one instant flinching from his purpose, rose somewhat earlier than usual, and having dressed himself with great care, and after taking a few turns in a certain passage, knocked at the nursery-door, and at once passed in.

He was greeted with a wild cry of welcome. His little brothers and sisters were in the position of "being got up," and were strewed about like rosy apples. Two of them, still in their night-gowns, were dramatizing a scene in real life, which was at the same moment enacting in another part of the room—that is to say, they had stripped a doll stark naked, and were washing it in a washhand basin—a process which, (her bust being of wax, and the rest of her being of calico and sawdust) rendered her unavailable in her capacity of doll, for evermore. Another was sitting up in his crib, and was driving four-in-hand to the "Star" at Richmond, with a pair of list garters, lent by the youngest nursemaid; and another was being tubbed. This fellow leapt from the hands of nurse to embrace his brother; but seeing the door open and the way clear, some sort of devil

entered into him, and caused him to run, stark naked as he was, violently down stairs. He reached the hall with great success, but was captured by a solemn young footman, and led back again in a proud and vain-glorious state of mind. Half-way up the stairs he bit the footman, who hoped that his lordship was not going to be naughty; which speech, being addressed by a very tall man to a naked child of three, struck Lord Charles as wonderfully funny. Meanwhile, above stairs, while all the nurses were out on the landing looking for the fugitive, Lady Florence held a regatta in the hip-bath with her brothers' and sisters' shoes, three of which were unfortunately swamped and sunk.

Lord Charles kissed them all. His brother George was at Eton, and his eldest brother, Lord Wargrave, in Italy; so nothing remained but to see his father and mother.

His father was in high feather. Lord (somebody or another) had accepted his offer for a certain mare. She had been sent home, and he incited Lord Charles to come down to Esham on a secret journey with him, and see her. Lord Charles pleaded the debate, and his father wondered whether poor Edward would like to come. At all events, he might get some

flowers from the gardener, and give them to that quiet little girl that his friend Elliot was going to marry. That girl seemed very kind to Edward; his mother said she was a good little body, and so on.

His mother was in her dressing-room. He did not trust himself much here. He said he had come to wish her "good morning." He kissed her and left her.

He asked the servants where was his brother Edward. His Lordship had gone to Church. It was as well. He left his father's house—a house of order, domestic love, of old renown and of chivalrous honour—to pursue his adventure with a worthless bully. When he thought of what that house might be by this time to-morrow, he grew sick, but he never flinched.

Was it ridiculous and out of place, that even now he should go round to the stables, to have a look at the horses, and to speak a word with the men? It was not very absurd in him. In his father's house the servants took rank after the children. The servants were all from the estates. Forgiveness was extended till seventy times seven, and discharges for misconduct were very rare: generally attended with utter

despair on the part of the culprit, and with tears, and a temporary seclusion on the part of the Duchess. No; on the whole there was nothing ridiculous in his visiting the stables.

He went into every stall, and he spoke to every man and boy there. He was the favourite of the family. He never rebuked but gently, and he always stood in the breach between the culprit and his father's anger, to the very last. People who know about these things say, that in some large old-fashioned establishments of this kind, there is a certain devoted affection which arises between master and servant, quite apart from interest. One would fancy that such a thing was quite possible. One has known of convict servants risking their lives for a good master; is such a thing impossible among footmen and grooms? Or is Jenkins, selfish, cowardly, and effeminate, to go down to posterity as the type, instead of the exception—merely because his master dresses him like a Tom-fool?

We know not. We only know that these servants were glad to see Lord Charles, and that he was, in his way, wishing them "Good-bye;" for at this time he believed that he would never see them again. He ordered the man who was supposed to have the

care of his person, to bring his cab to Mr. Elliot's lodgings at four, and then he went back to Captain Hertford's.

The captain had come back late last night, but was gone out early that morning. There was nothing to do but to go on to Austin's, and keep him in sight all day. But Austin was gone out too: his servant did not know where.

So Lord Charles got breakfast at his club, and waited impatiently. These two men might meet. Austin might have gone in search of Captain Hertford. Men came and talked to him. There was very little doubt that the Corn-bill would pass that night; there would be a long fractionous debate, an iteration of every argument on both sides, but it would be read. Not that Lord Charles cared much about it now.

And where was Austin? He had come home, and going to bed, had asked for Robin his dog. Miss Hilton's servant, old James, had called and fetched Robin away that evening. Miss Hilton's footman had reported, in the course of conversation, that one of Miss Hilton's maids had lit a bit of fire in old Miss Hilton's room, with the register down, and finding the room full of smoke, had run through the

streets bareheaded, raising the town, till she fell down in a dead faint at the engine-house door.

Austin knew that the next day was the day of Eleanor's monthly pilgrimage; if any one had told him that he meant to watch her, he would probably have struck him. And yet in his feverish state of mind, he went down early next morning, and looked at Mr. James's dogs.

He was in that worthy's front garden, listening to that worthy's platitudes with a deaf ear, when he saw his own dog, Robin, come bounding out of a by-street, from the direction of Millbank, and hunt a hen who was taking her breakfast in the middle of the road. He watched the street out of which he had come.

He saw Eleanor come out of that street. She was leaning on Captain Hertford's arm, and was talking eagerly to him—she who was his, by every tie and vow that could be made, was leaning on the arm of the man who was seeking his life—she who could keep a secret from him, could be in confidence with that bully, that assassin! There was no doubt about his purpose now. Either that man or he should die. The time came soon when he got his lesson; the time came when he would sooner have blown out his

own brains, than fire a pistol at the most worthless man alive, but the time had not come yet.

It was no use following them then; Hertford would be down for the debate that night. He went home, and soon after Lord Charles came to him.

Austin poured out his furious indignation to him, not only, alas, against Captain Hertford, but against Eleanor. Lord Charles only continued to assure him quietly, that the time would come when he would be sorry for what he was saying; that he, Lord Charles, would go bail for Eleanor with his life.

The weary day wore on. The day which both of them had looked forward to with such hope. There was no doubt that the Bill would be read a third time that night, and the Lords dare not— Alas, how little either of them cared for the Bill now, or for the Lords either!

At half-past five they both, by tacit consent, went down to the House; Lord Charles to his place, while Austin fought his way into the gallery. At this time affairs might have arranged themselves anyhow; the way they did arrange themselves was this.

Captain Hertford and Lord Charles were both eagerly anxious to meet, as we know. But at about ten o'clock Lord Charles remembered that his father

would be soon leaving the House of Lords, as he knew that he was going to Lady Something's party, or ball, or drum, or what not, for he had heard him say so. He had a desire to see his father again. He saw Austin, as he thought hopelessly wedged in the gallery; he saw Captain Hertford sitting sulkily opposite; he thought that he might safely slip out for five minutes and see his father once more.

Austin saw him rise and go; he saw Captain Hertford rise and follow him. Then he turned on the crowd behind him in the gallery, and fought his way out like a madman.

When he felt the cold night wind on his face he found himself among a crowd, a crowd of all sorts of people, fidgeting and talking about what was going on inside the House.* He felt puzzled and confused among so many fresh faces, until he saw a policeman whose face he knew, and asked him whether he had seen Captain Hertford.

The policeman, touching his hat, said, yes; that Captain Hertford had followed Lord Charles Barty in the direction of the Peers' entrance. Austin hurried that way as fast as he could go.

At that time the passage to the Peers' entrance

* The author left that crowd at a quarter past eight or so.

was a squalid sort of alley. With high slab palings on the right, and on the left a strange wooden building, beyond all again an archway. On the left, also, was a high wooden screen, perforated with square holes, which represented, unless we forget, Dr. Reid's ventilating apparatus. ("I tell you," said Lord Brougham once, "that I don't want explanation, I want air.") Altogether it was an odd sort of transition place, rendered more untidy by a low railing which ran along one side of it, nearly half-way across.

Up this passage Austin hurried. He was too late. He heard voices in dispute, raised above the common tone of conversation. When he came up there were three people in a group. One a peer; Lord Charles Barty, who leant with his back against the railings; and Captain Hertford who was opposite him. These were the three.

"You have heard what passed, my lord," were the first words that Austin heard. "I have told Lord Charles Barty that he is a liar."

"And you also heard, Lord Sayton," said Lord Charles, "that I, walking up here with you, and seeing Captain Hertford following me, turned on him, and without the least provocation, told him that he was a bully and a scoundrel, and that I also repeat

my assertion now. I suppose there is nothing more to be said, unless we intend to scold and fight like two costermongers."

"Well, I should say not," said Lord Sayton. "The affair seems plain, though I am devilish sorry for it!"

"This quarrel is mine!" said Austin, breathless.

"It should have been, by all accounts," said Lord Sayton; "but you are rather late, ain't you? Do you want me?" he added, turning round towards the two others.

"No, thank you, Sayton," said Lord Charles.

"I shall be glad of your assistance, Lord Sayton," said Captain Hertford.

"I spoke to Lord Charles Barty, not to you," said Lord Sayton. "You can notice that if you like: you will not find me packed in the Strangers' Gallery of the Commons, when you want me!"

"You shall answer for that speech, Lord Sayton," said Austin.

"Very well," drawled that most stupid of men.

They separated, and Lord Charles and Austin went away together. After a few steps Lord Charles ran back and overtook Captain Hertford.

"Shall you send your man to-night?"


"It will be better."

"Send him to Elliot's lodgings; I shall not go home. We shall never speak again. If anything happens to either of us don't bear any malice. I shall see you in the morning."

CHAPTER VII.

LORD CHARLES went home at once to Austin's lodgings, which were very close to Captain Hertford's. Austin persuaded Lord Charles to go to bed, which he did without much persuasion. Austin waited up for Captain Hertford's friend.

He was not long in coming. He was a Captain Jackson, whom Austin had seen before—the man whom he had seen before walking with Captain Hertford and Lord Charles Barty just before he had started for Ronaldsay. He had been to India since, and had come home wounded from one of the Sikh battles, almost with the news of Feroshah; a man of the Indian army, a good-natured gossiping man, a great Shickaree by his own account. Austin had listened to his tiger-stories often, and wished it had



been some one else who had come with the message now—some one possibly, with whom he could have picked a quarrel.

Captain Jackson began: "Is there no way out of this miserable business?"

"Do you see any, Jackson," said Austin, eagerly.

"Well, I am sorry to say that we are determined (utterly against my wishes, mind you) to go through with it. And I am sorry to say that we (utterly against my wish), having been insulted in the house, when we passed it over, and being again grossly insulted to-night, are determined to have a public apology."

"That is impossible," said Austin. "But I'll tell you what I will do."

"I don't think you have anything much to do with it, have you, Elliot? You should say what *we* will do."

"What *I* will do is this," said Austin. Barty is in bed and asleep. I will myself meet Hertford, and exchange shots to-morrow morning, before Barty awakes."

"I am sorry to say," said Captain Jackson, "that we, knowing your nobleness of character, have anticipated that course of action, and that we won't have it

at all. Lord Charles Barty must apologize, come out, or——”

“God help us,” said Austin.

“Amen!” said Captain Jackson sincerely. “You have never been at this sort of thing before. You will have to leave a good deal to me. If you will trust me, before God, to whom we both must give an account of to-morrow morning’s work, I will see everything fair. You have no pistols.”

“No!”

“Will you let me bring mine? They are smooth-bored and devilish bad. We may get out of it in that way. Got passports?”

“No, never thought of it.”

“Then you must come with us. Hertford warned me that something was in the wind yesterday, and made me get a family passport, in which our worthy captain figures as Mr. Jones *père*, and Lord Charles, you and I, as his promising sons. If one of us is taken ill we can account for it. Hertford, of course, having the character of a man rather too ready for this sort of thing, wishes to stand with the world as the soul of chivalry. So he made me get the passport. God grant it may not be needed.”

“God grant it,” said Austin.”

"Once more, Amen. With regard to time and place?"

"What do you propose?"

"I am sorry to say," said Captain Jackson, "that we, having provided the aforesaid family passport, are more in a position to insist than to propose. We, unless you can bring strong reasons against it, propose the first at Hampstead, at half-past seven to-morrow morning. It must be so, my dear Elliot, or we shall be stopped. The quarrel has been heard of, and the affair will be stopped else. If you oppose an early meeting, your man's reputation won't be worth an old shoe."

It was undeniable. Austin agreed, and the captain departed.

Austin went round to the stables, where his own horses were kept, and to his terror found that all was dark and shut up. He did not know exactly where his own servant slept, or he would have tried to arouse him. What between his terror for his friend's reputation and his terror at his friend's danger, he was nearly mad. He was at this moment very nearly going to the police-office and putting the matter before them, but he dared not. If he had done such a thing as that, his friend would for ever after have been

socially and politically dead. The difficulty now was to rouse a sleeping groom without awakening the others. Lord Charles's groom must be sleeping with one of his. It was a ridiculous difficulty, but it made him stamp, and curse the day he was born.

Luck assisted him. A man came into the mews, and as he walked aside to let him pass he saw it was Charles Barty's servant. He ordered him to bring the cab to his lodgings at five.

"Are you going out, sir?" asked the man.

"Yes," said Austin. "You must be secret and quiet. I will reward you well."

"I am sorry for it, sir. You was always a kind gentleman. I will be there, sir, punctual."

Then Austin went back, and going up to his room, where Lord Charles lay asleep in his bed, he sat in a chair all night, listening to the long-drawn breath of the sleeper.

He sat and thought all night. Ah Lord! it had all come to this. His own reputation tarnished, and the friend of his heart going out next morning in a quarrel which by rights was his. He knew that, however this business turned out, his own reputation was gone. He had had two hints to that effect

these last few days, and both of those had come from men eminently friendly to himself.

His reputation tarnished! Ah, it was maddening. How lucky that his father was dead, and that his death did not lie at his son's door, for that would have killed him outright. This man Hertford had been taking his name in vain. Austin had heard of it. His own friends at the United University Club had talked about it. Austin himself had gone down to the Club and talked threateningly of Hertford. The little world he lived in was expectant; how would that expectation be satisfied? By finding that he, Austin Elliot, had allowed the friend of his bosom to fight his battle for him; by allowing Lord Charles to go out with one of the deadliest shots in England.

It was unendurable, but there was no remedy in his code of morality. Therefore, although it was unendurable, it was endured, like most other unendurable things in this world.

But his own disgrace was not one quarter of the mischief. Suppose anything were to happen to Lord Charles? Suppose he were to be wounded? Suppose he were to be lamed for life, for that was possible—how would Austin feel then? The cloud he himself was under now might be cleared away. He

might force Captain Hertford to go out with him—nay! he was already determined to do so. It would be necessary. But if his friend was maimed in this encounter, he felt as though he could never hold up his head again. He determined that if any one proposed more than one shot, that the shots should pass through his own body.

So the short night wore on, and he sat in his chair without sleeping, trying, from time to time, to make out the outline of his friend's face in the dark. As the East began to grow bright, and the sparrows began to twitter outside the window, he dozed; but he must have wakened again within half-an-hour. The room was quite light now, and he could see his friend.

He was sleeping as peacefully as a child. The beautiful face was turned, in its expressionless repose, towards Austin. One bare arm was thrown half out of bed, with the palm of the hand uppermost, and the fingers relaxed; the other was laid under the sleeping man's head, among his close brown curls. It seemed a happy sleep, for he smiled, and babbled inarticulately in his dreams—a happy schoolboy sleep! Austin had awakened him from such a sleep at Eton, in old times, more than once, to come

bathing, or boating, or birdnesting. He remembered how that face had changed, from the half-unconscious expression fixed on it by some happy dream, into consciousness, into loving recognition of the friend who had awakened him. He remembered all that, and knew that he had to awaken him once more—to what? What expression would the face take now? What kind of curse would shine out of those eyes, as soon as the lids of them were raised, and the soul behind them awoke to the appreciation of the lamentable truth?

So there grew on poor Austin a horror and a dread of the sleeper's awaking; and as he slept on, a new dread—the dread of having to awaken him himself. But it must be done, and be done soon. Now there came into his head a something long forgotten, as long-forgotten trifles will come into men's minds, at times of awful anxiety like this. It would have made him smile at another time, but he remembered it now. He had read in some blackguard book about prizefighting, that the men who trained the prizefighters never awoke them in the morning, but that they put the window open, and that, after a short time, as soon as the fresh morning air reached the poor fellows' faces, they quietly awoke. He

remembered this now, and opened the window. In a short time, Charles Barty turned in his bed and awoke. His eyes met Austin's, and he smiled affectionately; but as consciousness came to him, that smile faded into an expression of anxiety, and almost of horror. If he had sat up in bed, and heaped curses on Austin's head, Austin could have borne it better than that look.

But it was late—they must hurry: that was something. They would have breakfast when they came back. The other people were to bring a doctor with them, so there was nothing to do but to drive fast. They spoke very little, and on indifferent subjects; Austin drove. Once Lord Charles turned round, and talked to the groom standing at the back of the cab, and gave orders about his hack being brought somewhere that afternoon. The groom said that his father's cob was lame, and perhaps his Grace might like to borrow his Lordship's hack. Whereupon Lord Charles confounded his father's cob (to Austin), and wished to God that his father would find himself in horses, and not be everlastingly borrowing his.

They were late. When they got on to the heath, they saw a dog-cart standing, with a groom at the

horse's head, and further on, they saw three men waiting for them—Captain Hertford, Captain Jackson, and the doctor.

They hurried forward. Captain Jackson and Austin went apart, and matters were soon arranged. "We must be quick, Elliot," said Captain Jackson.

They were very quick. The men were placed twelve paces apart, back to back, and their seconds gave them their pistols. Captain Jackson was to give the word. Austin and he retired, and Captain Jackson said, "Gentlemen, are you ready? Fire!"

They both faced one another at the same instant. Charles Barty raised his hand high over his head, and fired in the air. Captain Hertford took deliberate aim, and fired two seconds afterwards. The instant he had done so, Lord Charles leapt a foot off the ground, and then bringing his heels sharply down upon the turf, toppled over headlong on his left shoulder, and lay perfectly still.

Austin was beside him in an instant, but he was quite dead. Austin turned the heavy head over, and saw the last sign of life which appeared in that beautiful face. Two nerves in the hollows beneath his eyes quivered and throbbed for half a second, and then stopped for ever.

If I were to pile Pelion upon Ossa with grand words, I could give you no idea of the catastrophe more terrible than this. Lord Charles Barty was shot through the heart, and was lying, stone-dead, at the feet of Austin Elliot.

CHAPTER VIII.

AUSTIN had never seen death before. This was his first introduction to it. He was holding the face of the dead man between his two hands, and looking down with a strange incredulous terror into the sightless eyes.

And the dead man was his friend, a man he loved as David loved Jonathan. He had never done anything or thought anything, for he knew not how long, without this man coming into his mind. "What will *he* think about it?" "What will *he* say about it?" had always been his first thought after he had done anything. Now, now—

The two others were with him in a moment. Captain Hertford said, "This has all been fair. I am off for France." Jackson broke out into tears. "By God," he said, "this is a most horrible busi-

ness! I wish he had struck me dead before I came out on this accursed errand!" But Austin said nothing. He was kneeling on one knee, with the dead man's face between his hands, and a claw like that of an eagle, gripping at his heart.

"We must get away," said Captain Hertford.

"We had best be quick. Elliot, you will have to come with us."

"I shall stay where I am."

"You are mazed," said Captain Hertford, impatiently. "We shall be in trouble for this. Time is precious. You must cross with my passport."

"I tell you I shall stay where I am," said Austin, looking up at Hertford with that painful look of mingled terror and anger which Captain Hertford had seen before, and which he now remembered.

"Then I have done my duty and must go," said Captain Hertford. "Jackson, we must make haste."

They left him kneeling at the dead man's head. In a few moments Jackson ran back, while Captain Hertford waited for him.

"Elliot, don't be a madman. Come away. There will be the devil to pay for this, God forgive us! You must come with us. You shall!"

"I shall stay here."

"You are mad! Think better of it and come with us. Your mind is gone!"

"I know it is. Good-bye."

So Captain Jackson went reluctantly away, and left Austin with the dead man.

Lord Charles's groom came next. He touched Austin on the shoulder. "Mr. Elliot," he said, "is my lord wounded?"

Austin looked up in his face and said, "Your lord is dead!" He saw the man turn pale and sick. Then he saw him kneel down beside what had been Lord Charles, and untie the dead man's neckcloth. Then he opened his shirt and felt his heart. And lastly, by some strange instinct, he closed the dull staring eyes, which were never to open again. Then the two stood silent for a time.

"What is to be done now, sir?" said the groom at last.

"What is to be done?" said Austin. "Done! says he? Why, bring him to life again, and let me lie there dead and cold in his place. We have been hardly used, Tom. There is no mercy in Heaven, Tom; or, if there is, it is all kept for those who whine and cringe, and I have never done that, nor has this dead man. What have he and I done that

this has happened? Answer me that. What have he and I done that things should come to this?"

Tom was only a poor groom—a man not worth your notice in any way; but even he had a dull feeling that Mr. Elliot, dear gentleman! was beside himself, and was blaspheming in his grief. If you had given Tom a week to answer, he would have answered, "You have both of you done many things to deserve this; and the mere fact of your being here this morning proves it." But Tom did not get a week to think of his answer. He was thinking of how his dear dead lord's body was to be decently moved, before people came about and gathered into a crowd.

The problem was solved for him. Two policemen came up, and the elder of them said, "Is this gentleman dead, sir?"

"He is quite dead," said Austin, quietly.

"A duel, sir?" said the policeman.

"Yes, a duel," said Austin. "This dead man is or was Lord Charles Barty, the Duke of Cheshire's son; I am Mr. Austin Elliot, of the United University Club. I was his second, and I give myself into custody. Now, do be quick, or the people will be about."

He had not made many turns up and down before an inspector appeared, and Austin told him everything. "You will not take that groom into custody, will you, inspector?" said Austin.

"I ought to, sir," said the inspector.

"But don't do it," said Austin. "If it lay in the sphere of your duty to burn down Somerset House, you would not like to be taken into custody and leave the business to some one else. Now, see what that groom has to do. He was bred on the estate, and will do it quietly. He has got to go to Cheshire House and burn it down over their heads. He will go into the servants'-hall and ask to see the old nurse who nursed them all. And he will tell her; and she will tell the Duke; and the Duke will tell the Duchess, and they will curse my name, and the day I was born, and shut up the house close and dark. Lamentation, and mourning, and woe! I beg pardon. My head is going over this. If you knew all the circumstances, you could not wonder at it."

"God help you, sir!"

"Amen. But you will let this poor groom go? You were less than a man if you did not."

That was easily arranged. And then came the

terrible business of removing the corpse : and I will go no further, only hoping that I have not gone too far already. But if I thought that I could do more than I have done, to give honest men the contempt and the loathing, that I feel myself for the system of duelling—for the principle of making the devil arbiter of differences instead of God, I would go further. I would go all the length to which Jules Janin, or the younger Dumas, have gone in a very different cause.

Austin walked away with the inspector of police like a man in a dream. It seemed to him as if all the universe had sunk round him, and left him standing on a pinnacle far above the reach of human sympathy. It was so *horrible*. It was not so much that he was sorry or grieved, or that he could have wept wild tears for the fate of his friend ; that state of mind was not come yet, and was not to come for a long while. At present, the whole business was ghastly, horrible, unbelievable. It *must* be untrue. Charles Barty, merry, handsome, clever, the most loveable of human beings, so gentle, so good, such a thorough gentleman—Charles Barty, the man whose life had hitherto been a sort of beautiful, merry joke, yet who had shown promise of great things, should

occasion arise, this man could not be dead ! It was impossible that Death could have dared ! But Austin had seen his body put into a baker's cart, and had seen the legs fall.

Alas ! Austin, he was dead enough ; and you, my poor butterfly, having lived three-and-twenty years in a fool's paradise, your religious faith absolutely *nothing*, your political creed only built up out of the formulas used by your forefathers, in discussing questions which have been extinct many a long year ago ; your social creed being, that it was a good thing to get asked to such and such a party, and that you ought to get up pedigrees and know all about everybody—you, poor Austin, when you saw Lord Charles put into the baker's cart and driven slowly away ; were at the edge of a very black hell indeed. No wonder that you clung to the police inspector as a reality, at all events—as the link which connected you with the world which seemed to have sunk away under your feet.

It was well that Mr. Elliot was dead, or this would have killed him with a broken heart. That he who had brought up his son on formulas, social and political—which meant something in his time, but which now meant little or nothing—should be out of the

way and not see that painful look of puzzled horror on his son's face, that was well. Poor Austin was the Louis Sixteenth of duelling—the last, the kindest, the best of those who stuck to the old rule—the one most severely punished.

When they got to the police-office, the magistrate was trying the people who had got drunk the night before. Austin sent several special messengers, at the inspector's advice, to old friends of his father's, and sat wearily at one side of the court, listening to the other cases.

A chimney-sweep, for nearly murdering his wife. He had been remanded and remanded again, until the house-surgeon had pronounced his wife sufficiently recovered to go and give evidence. There she was, a drunken drab, with her head all plastered up with bandages. The house-surgeon had thought her dying at one time, and had sent for the magistrate to take her evidence : then, under fear of death, she had told the truth, but now, when in the dock, looking at the miserable, degraded, brutal hound she loved so well, she lied and lied in his favour, till the magistrate threatened to commit her for perjury ; and at every fresh lie (God help us !) her face seemed to grow grander and nobler, till she looked almost

beautiful. "She," thought Austin, "would die for that wretched cur, and I—"

Two boys, brothers, ages seventeen and eighteen. They had got the trick of going to Cremorne and such places, and spending too much money. They had put their silly heads together and committed a clumsy forgery—a forgery than which nothing more idiotic ever entered into the mind of man. They had torn a cheque out of their master's book, filled it up for ten pounds, and with the most clumsy imitation of their master's signature, had gone together to the bank and presented it. They were given into custody at once, and there they were in the dock, huddling together like two frightened sheep. The evidence was conclusive, and the magistrate asked them what they had to say. Whereupon Tom, the elder brother, moistening his dry lips with his tongue, confessed his guilt, and said that Bob, his younger brother, knew nothing about it. But Bob wouldn't have this by any means; he asserted shrilly that he had stolen the cheque, forged it, and had took Tom to the bank with him when he presented it, because they knew Tom and didn't know he, and also that Tom was a devil to lie, and always had been, which ask their mother. The chivalry of these two poor fools towards one

another was one more stab in Austin's heart. Now that the horrible catastrophe had come, he could see that by rising to the level of a higher law he might have saved his friend.

Then they shoved into the dock a boy who scuffled, and lost one shoe, and had it handed to him by the policeman; and after he had put it on, stood up again. A boy, gentlemen, of the sort worth attending to, because his clay has not been burnt to brick, but is still plastic. A boy who may yet be made a man if you can get hold of him. The very boy, gentlemen, of all persuasions, from Roman Catholic to Unitarian, that you *are*, thank you, getting hold of—all honour to you. A boy with a shock head, his hair down over his forehead, who when spoken to puts his fists into his eyes and lifts his elbows up above his ears, expecting a blow. *You* know him, messieurs the Scripture-readers, brothers of the holy order of St. Francis, district visitors of the Swedenborgian, or whatever you call yourselves, you know the young dog; and, in spite of all your attempted proselytizing and your squabbling, you all mean him well! Have we not seen your good works?

This shock-headed boy being put into the dock, and accused of being concerned, with his elder

brother, still at large, in the tripping up of an old gentleman and the stealing his watch, "didn't know nothink about it!" and in spite of the truculent cross-examination of Mr. Barney Moses (from the office of Ikey Moses and Son), and the hints of the magistrate, that in consequence of his youth he would be held innocent, he still aggravatingly and perversely persisted in "knowing nothink about it," without orders from his elder brother.

Then was this thieves' honour higher than gentlemen's honour? Was it the same article, or a spurious one? There was no time for Austin to think out the question, or he would probably as a reasonable man have settled it this way:—That up to this year 1846, the best and highest men in the land had never had moral courage to decline the test of the duel; that he was one of the first victims of a new state of things; that, acting on the old rules of honour, he had done nothing with regard to this miserable business, but what was inexorably right and necessary. That, through mere ill-luck, his own reputation was tarnished, and his friend killed. That was the truth; but Austin could not see it just now. He placed the honour of these thieves and prostitutes above his own, and wished for death.

The charge against him was made. The magistrate required two sureties of 500*l.* each. They were instantly forthcoming, from two, or if need were, from a dozen of his father's friends ; and Austin, after thanking them, went rapidly away and took a passport for France, and then went to his lawyer.

He and his lawyer sat late. He gave him orders to prepare deeds, conveying all his property to Eleanor in case of a conviction (which was inevitable),* and told him that he would appear and sign them in good time. He then made a short will, leaving all his property to Eleanor, in case of his death before his conviction. Then he wrote to her a short note, requesting *her* to make good, out of his effects, the loss of his father's old friends, with regard to his bail. And then he went home.

His servant was waiting for him. He paid the man's wages, and gave him a paper, which authorized

* It seems doubtful whether or no this document or documents would have been worth the paper they were written on. The law about duelling may be found in Mr. Samuel Warren's article in "Blackwood," on the duel between Lord Cardigan and Captain Tuckett. Our legal knowledge is insufficient to decide whether or no the conveyance of the property of a man under bail, to a friend, will hold good. Our own ignorance on this point is not very surprising. But it *is* surprising that the question, so very important, seems not to be decided yet.

him to sell his three horses, his cab, and his dog-cart, at Tattersall's, and to pay the money into his banker's. This paper was not worth very much in a legal point of view, but he knew his man, and knew that he could trust him. He told him also to take care of his dog Robin; and should anything happen, to take him to Miss Hilton. Then he had his landlady, Mrs. Macpherson, up, and settled with her, while his man packed his portmanteau.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon before all this was done, and then he sent his man for a cab. His fool of a servant cried, and prayed him that he would let him go with him, but Austin was pale and resolute, and went alone.

A strange journey. One of the maddest, silliest journeys ever undertaken. First he went to Calais, and very soon found that Captain Hertford was not there, and had not been there. Then he posted to Boulogne, and spent three days there making inquiries. Captain Hertford had evidently not been there either. The Police Bureau knew nothing of him at all. Monsieur must have been frightfully deceived by interested persons; no such person had been there. Monsieur, weary of life, feeling hot about the head, thought he would go bathe, and did

so. The bathers sat on the shore, and ate hot *gauffres*, and read "Le Juif Errant," not yet grown stale, and "Monte-Christo," which will never grow stale. But no one knew anything of Captain Hertford, or any such man. Had not Prince Louis Buonaparte shaved off his moustaches, put two planks on his shoulders, and walked out of Ham, what did Monsieur think of that, as an instance of French courage? Hey then! Monsieur was forced to confess that the prince had shown courage of the very highest order. But finding no intelligence of Captain Hertford, he crossed again to Dover.

There seemed only one port left now to which Captain Hertford would be likely to have gone—he must have taken passage from Brighton to Dieppe. *He might* have gone to Havre; that was still possible. Austin remembered that he had said, "I am off for France," and felt sure that he would get on his track. He was more likely to have gone to Dieppe than to Havre. Austin went down to Brighton, and crossed in the steamer *Venezuela*, which steamer, I sincerely hope, is gone to the bottom long ago; for having endured a gale of wind in her through one night, about two years before the time I speak of; and having endured many gales of wind, in many ships, in all

sorts of strange seas since, I have come to the conclusion, that the steamer Venezuela is (or I hope was) the worst, wettest, and most abominably dangerous sea-boat ever built.

Mrs. Taylor, of the "Hotel d'Angleterre," dead, I fear, many years ago, the best and cheeriest landlady that ever roared out of an upper window,— "Alphonse (you stupid lout, may God forgive me!) Venez-ici touted sweet, pour brusser les souliers de jeune Mossoo! Drat the man, he's ailing of his hair; cochon!—entendez-vous?" Mrs. Taylor, I say, knew nothing of Captain Hertford; but Austin, going into the public room at the Hotel Angleterre, met a man whom he knew, who gave him the information required. A university man, in ill-health, come over for change of air and scene.

"This is a bad business," he said. "But, Elliot, mind me, I don't believe one word of what they say against you. I know you too well, to think it possible that you thrust forward that poor fool of a nobleman to fight your quarrel. It is a lie!"

"It is, indeed," said Austin.

"I know it is. I think that this Captain Hertford is sorry for what has happened. We must be just to all men, Elliot. My cousin went in the same boat

with him to Antwerp last week, and he says that he looked as pale as death, and as wild as a hawk."

There was still time. The Dart was getting up steam outside the hotel windows. Austin was not very long in getting on board of her. Next morning he was at Brighton, the same day in London. The same night with a *pour voyager* passport, on board the Antwerpen! In twenty-four hours at Antwerp.

At the Bureau of police, he got on Captain Hertford's trail at last, and he followed it like a bloodhound. Captains Hertford and Jackson, it appeared, had arrived suspiciously, with very little luggage, and had taken tickets for Aix-la-Chapelle. He followed on. At Aix-la-Chapelle he was puzzled again. He was in Prussian territory, and the police were not so communicative. But he luckily remembered, that Herr Nielsen Keilleter, the greatest man in Aix-la-Chapelle, was an old friend of his father's. He called on him, and the good old man, little dreaming what he was doing, gave him his assistance. Captain Hertford and Captain Jackson had gone on to Cologne, further than which, in those days, the railway did not go.

Here, at Cologne, he was once more left to his

mother wit. He got hold of a *lacquey de place*, who desired to shew him the cathedral, the eleven thousand virgins, the skulls of Gaspar, Melchoir and Baltasar, and, as old James would have said, "the hull biling," for one thaler. Being interrogated, the commissionaire deponed that Captain Hertford was, at that same speaking, staying in the hotel at Deutz. Austin having paid his thaler, repaired there, and found only a gentle old Indian colonel, by name Hanford, whom he disturbed at his dinner. He was quite at fault again, and had to leave the old man's presence abashed.

Ah! it was a weary journey. Hope quite dead, and life quite worthless. He went out and sat upon the wharf at Dentz, and looked at the river, sweeping, hissing, boiling on, under the young May moon.

A great river. The first he had ever seen. It came, they said, spouting in a thousand cataracts out of the everlasting snow, and then went gleaming and sparkling on through such wildly beautiful scenery of feathering woodland and hanging rock, as no one could realize without seeing. There was a grand catastrophe at Schaffhausen. After that, it was a mere dull sweeping waste of waters, and at last, down there below Düsseldorf, the mighty river, born

in the eternal snow crystals, begins to creep ignominiously towards the sea, through fifty sluggish canals.

So poor Austin sat there for a time, trying to compare his life to that of the Rhine; quite forgetting that the river only became useful and beautiful after its catastrophe at Schaffhausen, and that its real usefulness and its real beauty, increased with every mile, till it reached the sea, and was lost in the eternity of the ocean. And after a time he held his way across the bridge of boats, towards the great cathedral, which heaved up its mighty ribs above the sleeping town.

He gained no further intelligence of Captain Hertford. But in his eagerness of purpose his wit was sharp. He knew that Captain Hertford gamed, and would be very likely to be found near gaming tables. His ignorance of the world generally, and the continent in particular, were so very great, that he did not know which were the places hereabout, where men came to lose their money. So, with an Englishman's instinct, he sent for the landlord.

The landlord's son came: a handsome young fellow, who had had his nose slit in some childish Burschen duel. At Austin's question he seemed

puzzled. Answered that there were tables at Aix-la-Chapelle, at which Monsieur (they spoke in French) could have played (being a foreigner) to his heart's content.

Austin told him that he did not want to play. That he wanted to find a man, whom he was most likely to find in the neighbourhood of a gaming-table.

"An affair of honour, then," said the young man.

"Well," said Austin, "it is something of that sort. I feel sure you would not betray me."

The young man at once grew heroic and mysterious. He, too, had had his affairs, but what imported it to speak of them. He laid his finger on his wounded nose, and Austin did not laugh; though when he compared in his mind the childish fencing-match, in which the young man had been engaged, and the affair in which he would find himself in a few days, he felt very much inclined to do so.

This young man informed him, that the next place on the general route of tourists where one played was a place called Ems, in the Duchy of Nassau. That one went from hence by steamer to Coblenz, and by *diligence* or *voiture*, as one pleased, to Ems. That there were two companies of vapour

vessels on that river, both of which professed to take one to Coblenz. The one, the Cologne company, possessing a magnificent fleet, swift as the wind, officered by gentlemen, supplied with every luxury ; the other, the Dusseldorf company, composed of miserable and rotten boats, slow, dirty, officered by abusive villains, who too often succeeded in the dearest wish of their hearts, that of *abimer* in the depths of their noble river, not only their rotten boat, but also their deluded passengers.

Austin having been previously recommended by a friend to go by the Dusseldorf company, as being the best of the two, felt very much inclined, after this exhibition of spite, to do so. He decided to go on by the first boat, and did so. It was a Cologne boat.

He remembers that after they got beyond Bonn there was some fine scenery, or he thinks there was, because a noble young American, with whom he made immediate acquaintance on board, kept calling his attention to it. But he was too anxious to care whether the hills were ten feet high or ten thousand. His time was getting short. His bail would be forfeited in little more than a fortnight, and Captain Hertford as far from being found as ever.

He slept that night at the "Giant," at Coblenz,

and the next morning rumbled quietly away towards Ems, up the pleasant Lahn valley, before the mists had fully rolled away from the summits of the sheets of feathering woodland, which rose overhead on all sides.

He put up at the Hotel de Russie, and, after breakfast, went down to the Kursal, which round the Kessel, and the Kranken, was thronged with all sorts of people drinking the waters; and here he loitered for something like half-an-hour, until some one pushed against him accidentally in the crowd, and apologized to him. It was a magnificent Tyrolese, the first that Austin had ever seen. The man's enormous stature, the honest repose of his face, his grand dress, and his elegant easy carriage, attracted Austin. It was a new animal, and a very remarkable one. He smiled and returned the man's courtesy in French. Following him with his eyes, he saw that, grand as he was, he was only the keeper of a stall for the sale of Tyrolese nick-nacks, but he determined to have some talk with him. He went up and bought some trifle or another, and engaged him in conversation for a little time. At last he asked, "Had he a chamois head?" The man had not, "But if Monsieur would accompany

him to his brother's stall, he should have his choice of several."

Monsieur did so, and as Monsieur approached our younger brother's stall, he became aware that Captain Hertford was standing in front of it, bargaining for a pair of gloves.

Austin turned to the Tyrolese, and raised his finger. The man, with instinctive high-bred courtesy, bowed, and turned back to his own stall, and Austin stood, not quite certain how to proceed.

Captain Hertford bought his gloves, and turning into the main room of the Kursal, approached the counter in front of the spring. It was evident that he was going to drink his waters.

He had the red Bohemian glass raised to his lips, when Austin came behind him, and said, quietly, "Captain Hertford!"

Captain Hertford was no coward; but he knew the voice, and when he turned he was as pale as death. When he saw Austin's wild face, the glass he held fell from his hand, and flew, splintered, in a hundred ruby crystals, about the stone pavement at his feet.

"I suppose you know what I want of you," said Austin.

"Do you want satisfaction?" said Captain Hertford, in a low voice.

"Yes."

"It is a mistake. That last business was devilish horrid. Do you repeat that you want satisfaction?"

"Yes."

"Very well, your blood is on your own head. Shall you send to-day?"

"Yes. Who am I to send to?"

"Jackson and I are at the Hotel d'Angleterre, over the river. Good morning."

He did not know a soul there; he had to go and find Captain Jackson to get an introduction to some one. Captain Jackson found him a Frenchman, who was much pleased with the business, and who proceeded to make all arrangements. He returned soon to Austin, and told him that they were to walk out that very evening to a place called Dausenau.

They, at the time appointed, sauntered up along the road, to the quaint old village, and turned up to the left, into a romantic, deeply-wooded glen; through the bright green meadows of which a bright trout-stream came flashing and pausing, and babbling pleasantly of peace, and spring-tide, and hope. Austin for one instant, mad, ruined, and desperate as he was, felt the

influence of the June evening tide, and longed to be at rest—in his grave if need were—to be anywhere but where he was. Feeling no fear, but a mixture of grief, remorse, and horror difficult to bear, preserving reason at the same time.

While in this frame of mind, he passed near a mill and out into a meadow, and there was the author of all this misery and woe before him. In less than ten minutes he was standing cool and calm, face to face with him, with a loaded pistol in his hand. Surely Hertford's day of reckoning was come. Not yet.

Austin had no more intention of firing his pistol at Captain Hertford, than he had of blowing out his own brains. The last affair had been, as Captain Hertford said, so horrid, that Austin was determined that he would never again have any hand in a repetition of such a thing, unless he himself were the victim. So when Captain Hertford had fired, and he heard the ball whistle close by his head, he turned coolly away and fired at a piece of rock among the copse on the right of the meadow.

But Captain Hertford insisted upon another shot; and this brought on a general wrangle, during which it became painfully evident that the gallant captain

had been drinking. There was nothing to be done but to place the men again, it seemed. This time Austin again fired away to the right, and, luckily for himself, was very slightly grazed on the leg. The affair was, of course, instantly stopped. Austin had fought his first and last duel. He had satisfied every requirement that the most punctilious bully could make. He had hunted Captain Hertford over the Continent till he had found him, had had him out, and had been unluckily wounded by him. He appealed to the three others; they confirmed him. Jackson said that he would take care that everything should be known in London on his return, and Austin limped off back to Ems, somewhat lighter in heart than before. He had faced one of his troubles successfully; his reputation was secure again; he could look a man in the face; he had made due pilgrimage to the outraged idol, honour, and had done sacrifice. The god was slightly in his debt—or, at all events, things were about square between them. This was, so far, satisfactory. He knew (who better?) that this fetish he had been taught to worship, was a cruel and vindictive demon; but, like a true idolater, he believed that, by overloading his idol with sacrifices, he might lay it under obligations, and, so to speak, have a case

against it, a case which, under some sort of law, would hold good, and must be attended to.

“ Was it for this,” says the old nigger in that most beautiful book, “ The Cruise of the Midge,” after he had pitched his idol into the lee scuppers in his wrath, “ was it for this that I gave you chicken, and stick fedder in your tail—eh?” He, like Austin, had a strong case against his fetish.

CHAPTER IX.

AUSTIN made his appearance in due time at his attorney's office in Lincoln's Inn.' The clerks looked very grave, and one of them showed him into the presence of the old man. Austin saw him rise hurriedly and turn pale when he appeared; Austin shook him warmly by the hand.

"So you have come back," said the attorney. "Ah, foolish, foolish boy. How I have hoped and prayed that you might be too late. But stay; there is time. My dear Austin, let me beg you on my knees, for the sake of your good name and your father's memory, to go back to France this night. Think that in three days it will be too late for ever."

"I cannot, old friend, in honour. The wrong I have done to the law shall be punished by the law. Say no more about it."

The old man said no more. He did not hide from

Austin that he feared a conviction; that he hardly knew how it was to be avoided.

"God's will be done. You feel sure of a conviction?"

"Almost."

"The jury acquitted P—— last March," suggested Austin.*

"In direct opposition to Erle's summing up," said the old man, eagerly. "And why? Because they believed that it was Liston's operation which killed S——, and not H——'s bullet. That is why. They gave him the benefit of that doubt because—because—well, because their sympathies went *with* P——. They considered him blameless—only a young fellow who had done what fifty others had done before him; gone out with his friend."

"And their sympathies will not be with me, then?" said Austin.

"No," said the old man steadily. "If it kills me to say so to your father's son, I will say it. This duel has been talked about a great deal. Lord Charles Barty was a young man of great promise, and the newspapers have written leading articles about it. It has made a great stir in London. But all ranks and

* Referring to the Gosport duel.

all parties agree in condemning you. Everybody knows, or think they do, that you and Captain Hertford were rivals for the hand of this Miss Hilton. Everybody has heard that you went to the United University Club, and spoke threateningly about Captain Hertford. Everybody (except myself and those who know you) believe that you let Lord Charles fight this duel for you. Among others who believe this are the jury. The judge will tell them, in summing up, to banish from their minds all that they have previously heard about the case; but they won't, not if I know 'em; they never do, confound 'em. Look at P——'s acquittal, Austin, my poor boy, and there read the story of your own conviction."

"I see what you mean very well," said Austin; "that in P——'s case they knew, from what they had heard elsewhere, that he was, as near as possible in such a case, blameless; that in mine, from what they have heard elsewhere, they believe me more morally guilty than the principals themselves; and, therefore, that they will convict. Is it not so?"

"That is the state of the case. But there is time to get out of the way. You can make everything good, and so on. It is nothing. You ought to be off now. Come, let us go."

"No," said Austin, "I think not. I think, old friend, that we will see this matter out to the very end. I am so careless of life now, that I would rather be punished in this world somewhat. It would, at all events, give me the feeling, to the end of my wretched life, that if I had sinned, so also had I suffered. It may not, you say, abate one jot of my eternal punishment hereafter; but, speaking in a selfish point of view, I would sooner let this matter take its course. I will not have the whole of the retribution, which must come on me sooner or later, left for the next world."

"I do not know what more to say, Austin Elliot," said the attorney. "Must we go on?"

"Certainly, I have broke God's laws, as well as man's. I have been mad. Do you know what I have been doing abroad?"

"No."

"Committing another crime. I hunted that man, Hertford, till I found him, and then had him out. I need hardly tell you that I would have died sooner than fire at him. But in doing this I have committed another crime, I fired away from him, but still I gave him the chance of adding to his guilt in murdering me. I will take my punishment

for both, and try to bear it. But I shall die. Let us speak of business. About those papers which you were to get ready?"

"This plan of yours," said the attorney, after a long pause, "of conveying your property won't do. I have had the best opinion about it. Lord Cardigan tried it six years ago, and it is the opinion of the best men that you had better trust to the mercy of the Crown. In Lord Cardigan's case, it was a flagrant attempt to defeat justice. It would not be allowed again. It must not be even mentioned. Your chance is submission. If you choose to sign your will, do so. You will go and see Miss Hilton to-morrow?"

"No; Eleanor has made her bed, and must lie on it. I love her, old friend, but she could keep a secret from me which she could tell to that cut-throat bully, Hertford."

"I wish I was in possession of facts," said the attorney. "If I was, I should find that you were utterly wrong. I know that as surely as I know that the sun shines. Come, go to her."

"I ought not, I dare not, I will not. Have it which way you will. She, by her absurd affectation of mystery, helped to make me mad and jealous.

If she cares for me, let her come to me in prison, and make it up there. In prison, I say. They won't *hang* me, will they? By Gad! they won't *dare* to do that."

"Erle," said the attorney, looking steadily at Austin, "when summing up in P——'s case, laid down that every one present at a duel, either as principal or second, was guilty of murder. They *could* hang you, you know. Perhaps they won't. Indeed, I don't believe they will. Transportation for life is generally the next sentence, after that twenty-one years, then fourteen. Fourteen years is a devilish long time, and you might be at Boulogne to-morrow morning."

This was the hardest assault that Austin had had. He stood firm under it, and the attorney, seeing nothing was to be made of him, told him that, if convicted, he would probably be imprisoned for a month, possibly for six. And after this they parted.

* * * * *

Let her come to him in prison, if she really loved him. Let her explain her deceit there. And there let him tell her that he had forgiven her—that he was a ruined man—that it did not consort

with his honour that their engagement should go on—that his pride would not allow him to link an heiress of such brilliant prospects, with his own desperate fortunes. Then let them part for ever.

Austin went to prison in due time, and dreed his weird there as we shall see. But she never came near him there. And yet have I done my work so very poorly that you distrust her? I hope not.

CHAPTER X.

It was a most interesting case, and the court was crowded. The newspapers had been clamouring for a conviction. P——, they said, had been acquitted through false sentimentality on the part of the jury. The newspapers did not complain of this. P—— was as innocent as a man might be under such circumstances. A noble young fellow, who could not have acted in any other way ; a man who bore the highest character in every way. But still a conviction was wanted, and this was the very case in which to convict. This young man, Elliot, had notoriously thrust his friend Lord Charles Barty into a quarrel, which should have been his own, and had sneaked out of it himself. By every law, human and divine, by civil law, and by the laws of honour, this Elliot was the man to make an example of.

The question was, "Would he put in an appearance?" The more long-headed and shrewd people said, "O Lord, no! there was not a chance of it. That you might make your mind quite easy on that score, my good fellow. That they believed they knew something of the world, and that they put it to you, as a judge of human nature, and a reasonable being, whether it was likely that he would put in an appearance after three weeks' law." The men, who knew Austin best, thought quite differently, and had to endure what the deep dogs before mentioned said of him, which, accompanied as it was with that peculiar contemptuous smile, which the deep dogs aforesaid generally assume, when they are being deeper than usual, was very hard to bear, but which had to be endured (as we said before of unendurable things) nevertheless.

"It was against Austin Elliot's interest to appear. Therefore, he would not appear." Conclusion not all right, by any means, in consequence of the omission of a rather important middle term. It is astonishing how some shallow men, merely from the fact of denying the possibility of a man acting on high and disinterested motives, get to think themselves worldly wise; and it is still more astonishing, how wiser and better men than themselves shake their heads, and

give them credit for worldly wisdom and knowledge of human nature. Why, the pickpockets and thieves in any police-court, will show them what nonsense they talk, when they place self-interest as the only source of human action. But if you bray a fool in a mortar, he will only turn round on you, and offer to prove that he was right from the beginning.

So, when Austin's name was called, and he stepped quietly into the dock, and stood there pale and anxious, but perfectly calm; the wise men were slightly puzzled, but made out in a few minutes, the theory, that Austin's game was to submit, throw himself on the mercy of the court, and save his property. Oh! deep-dyed idiots! So utterly unable to appreciate the grief, the despair, the horror in that wild young heart; and the strange, half-heathenish feeling, which was there too, that he might, by suffering in his own person, atone for his sin; and that by faithfully and unflinchingly going through this adventure to the end, by enduring courageously all the consequences of it, that he might perhaps raise himself to the level of his dead friend. So the mainspring of all human action is self-interest, gentlemen! So you have never had a friend, and never want one! Let us grant you, that the Samaritan was going to stand

for Jericho, and was glad of the opportunity of striking a blow at the Levite interest, and let us have done with it. He only gave the landlord two pence, and we never hear of his having come back and paid the rest of the score. Is that the way you would argue? Very well; he did the thing very cheap. He was a long-headed man. You will probably, however, not find him in the same circle of the Paradise of Fools with yourselves.

It all turned out as Austin's attorney had predicted. Every member of the jury had been talking about the duel this three weeks past.

The escape of Prince Louis Buonaparte from Ham, and the Barty-Hertford duel, had been the main subjects of conversation among them for that time. When they sat in that box, they were requested to dismiss from their minds all that they had heard outside that court. A modest request this, to ask twelve men to forget what they had been talking about for the last fortnight. It was not complied with; it was childish to suppose that it could be; no one ever did think that it would be; Austin was condemned before he came into court. Counsel spoke on each side. The counsel for the prosecution were very moderate, the counsel for the

defence did their best, which was nothing. The judge summed up almost in the very words of Mr. Justice Erle two months before, in a similar case, but every one of the jury had formed their own opinion ; and that opinion was identical in all the twelve of them, to wit, that Austin had not acted "honourable," and so they found him guilty of manslaughter. A perfectly just finding, but on perfectly unjust grounds.

The judge gave a glance at the jury, in which, said some who watched him, there was a slight gleam of contempt. He paused before he passed sentence, and when he began to speak, he spoke rather low. "It had pleased Almighty God," he said, "for some inscrutable reason, to strike down the prisoner at the bar, in the very beginning of what some had thought would have been a very noble and glorious career. He, as an old man, earnestly prayed the prisoner at the bar, that in the solitude and seclusion, to which he was now to be condemned, that he would take this lesson to heart, and remember that God only chastened in his infinite love."

A pause, and a profound silence. The jury felt uneasy, and began to wish they had done like P—'s jury, and let the young gentleman off.

The judge went on, though his voice was a little

husky. "I would not add one iota to the terrible remorse which I know you feel. Nay, I would lighten it. Remember my words in prison. If this chastisement is taken to heart, the time will come, Austin Elliot, when you may bless the day in which you stood in that dock. I am condemning you to social and political death. At this moment a cloud passes over your life, hitherto so bright and happy, the shadow of which will remain, and will never wholly pass away from you again, on this side the grave. The jury have done their duty. It remains for me to do mine.

"One year's imprisonment."

The turnkey tapped him on the shoulder, and he followed the turnkey out, and was given over to a policeman. He brushed the shoulder of the next prisoner, a young man, a burglar, who looked at him curiously, and laughed, and said that it was a good thing that the swells got it sometimes, though if he had the giving on it to 'em—. Austin didn't hear any more than that, and did not appreciate or care about what he had heard. He was confused, and felt as if he was going to be ill. He asked for some water, and they gave it to him, and then he sat down and began thinking.

A year. This was 1846. Then it would be 1847. What was the day of the month? He could not remember, and asked the policeman.

The eleventh of June. The policeman repeated it twice, and then Austin thanked him, but his mind was elsewhere. A woman who sat opposite to him, a weary witness, had got on odd boots. They were both black jean boots, and were both for the right foot. One was trodden on one side, and the other was gone at the toes, but Austin was wide awake enough to see that they were both right-foot boots. You couldn't take *him* in. What a fool the woman must be; perhaps she was drunk when she put them on. She looked a drunken sort of a drab. But there was something funny in it. Austin, God help him, had a quiet laugh over it; and soon they told him it was time to go.

And so he went, patient and contented enough, for happily he was just now past feeling anything acutely. As he was going down the corridor, something struck him. When he had started from home that morning, his dog Robin had followed him, and would not be driven back. He remembered that now. He asked a policeman, who was standing by, to see after the dog for him, and take him to Miss

Hilton's, in Wilton Crescent, and said she would give him five shillings. The man said, "Yes, he would," and Austin thanked him, and as he stepped through the crowd into the prison van, he looked round for his dog, but could not see him.

Robin had seen him, though, and was quite contented. His master, thought he, was busy to-day, and was now going for a drive. Robin had waited for Austin in all sorts of places, for all sorts of times, and had seen Austin get into all sorts of carriages and drive away without thinking about him. His custom, on these occasions, was to tear along the street, in front of the vehicle into which Austin had got—be it cab, carriage, or omnibus—with joyous bark, ready to take his part in the next pleasant adventure which should befall. So now he dashed through the crowded Old Bailey at the hazard of his life, racing and leaping in front of the prison-van which held his ruined and desperate master, as if this were the best fun of all.

The van took Austin to the great bald prison by the river-side, and he was hurried in. The cruel iron door clanged behind him, and sent its echoes booming through the long dismal whitewashed corridors. And the clang of that door fell like a death-

knell on his ear. "I am condemning you," said the judge, "to social and political death." He knew it now. The door jarred, and clanged; and the world knew Austin Elliot no more.

Outside that great prison-door all was glorious June sunshine; the river flashing on, covered with busy craft, towards the tall blue dome which rose into the air above the drifting smoke, far away eastward. The June sun smote fiercely on the long prison-wall, on the quiet road which passed it, on the great iron door which had shut in Austin Elliot and all his high-built hopes and fancies. There is not a duller place in all London than that river-terrace beneath the prison-wall. There is never anything to see there. People who have cause to go that way generally hurry past; there is nothing to see there in general.

But for many days after this, people who had passed in a hurry came dawdling back again: for there was something to attract them, though they would have been troubled to tell you what. There sat, all this time, a dog against the prison-door, in the burning sunshine—a dog who sat patient and spoke to no other dogs, but who propped himself up against the nails and bars, and panted in the heat, and snapped

sometimes at the flies. Those who turned and came back again knew, by their mother wit, that the dog had seen some one go into that prison, and had set himself to wait till he came out again; and they spoke in low tones the one to the other, and tried to get the dog away, but he would not come. And one slipshod drunken woman, whose husband was also behind that door, urged by some feeling of sickly sentimentality, which we will charitably attribute to gin, if you please, lest we should be accused of sentimentality ourselves; brought the dog what we strongly suspect to have been her own dinner, and stood by while he ate it. Robin, poor dog! made many friends during his solitary watch under the burning prison-wall; for the people who pass by Millbank are mostly of the class whose highest idea of virtue is a certain blind self-sacrificing devotion—(reasons of such devotion, or merit of object, not to be inquired into by respectable folks, if you please).

So Robin kept watch in the burning sun, and got himself precariously fed by thieves and thieves' wives. Sometimes the great door behind him would be opened, and then he would lope out into the middle of the street, and, with his head on one side, peer eagerly up the dim vista of whitewashed pas-

sages beyond. The blue-coated warders would whistle to him, and say, "Here, poor fellow!" but he would only shake his long drooping tail for an instant, almost imperceptibly, and stand where he was. If there was a stranger present, the blue-coated warders would tell him, that that was the dog of a young swell, they had got inside for duelling, and that that dog had been there for above a week. Then the door would be shut again, and Robin would take his old post in the sun, and catch the flies.

For more than ten days he stayed there. At the end of that time he went away. The great door was open one day, and three or four warders were standing about. Robin had gone into the middle of the street, when a very tall, handsome young man came walking by with his eyes fixed on the prison.

He nearly stumbled over Robin. When Robin saw him, he leaped upon him, and the young man caught him in his bosom. And the young man was of the Scotch nation, for he said—

"It's his ain dog, if it's no his ain self. What, Robin, boy, do ye mind Gil Macdonald, and the bonny hill-sides of Ronaldsay!"

CHAPTER XI

So went matters outside the prison-door, in the bright summer sunshine. Inside that door a generous, noble-minded, unselfish young man; a young man who had, in his time, according to the light which had been shown him, his lofty aspirations towards the only good he knew of, political and social success; was left without a friend or a hope, beating himself to desperation and death against his prison-bars. Dare you come in?

But, in going, we may take this comfort with us: Austin would have required very long drilling to have made a high place in public life. Of that I feel quite sure. He was far too impulsive and thoughtless; far too prone to believe the last thing which was told him, to accept the last theory put before him, and to say that it must be the best; to have

succeeded. Practice would have given him the power of closing his ears to argument, and acting only on foregone conclusions. Practice might have given him the trick of listening to his opponent, and ignoring all his sound arguments, catching him when he tripped ; would have, in time, formed him into a shallow and untruthful debater, of the third class, like—(Heaven help us, where are we getting to now ?) He was born for nobler things than to be a little dog, doing the barking for big dogs, with thick skins and strong nerves, who meant biting. He would, I fear, have dropped into a low place. His habit of seeing the best side of all opinions, and of having none of his own, his terror of adverse criticism, and his almost childish anger against opponents, would have made him but a poor man for public life. He would have successively believed all creeds, till he had none of his own.

That June morning we know of, they shut the gate behind him, and he knew that it was all over and done. He felt that he had died his first death, and that the clang of that door was as the rattling of the earth on his coffin. At that moment, he saw, so great is Divine mercy, among the burnt ashes of his past life, one gleaming spark of hope ; he had,

at all events, seen the worst, short of death ; he was young and the world was large ; his imprisonment would be over soon, only a year. The world was very large. There were other worlds besides this cruel, inexorable English one.

But that spark of hope disappeared for a time, when the sordid unbeautiful realities of his prison life began to be felt. His idea was, that he would be locked up between four walls, and left to eat his heart, until his time was out. Lucky for him it was not so. There were rules in that prison, so degrading, that his mere loathing of them kept him from going mad. Little acts of discipline and punctuality, which, in his sane mind, he would have acknowledged as necessary, but which now irritated him. He had to go to chapel in the morning ; he had to come out to the door of his cell, and touch his cap to the governor ; and to do other things worse than this, little things, which he would not so much have cared to do when free ; little things which, had he been travelling, in the desert or the bush, he would have laughed over, yet which now, when he was forced to do them, degraded him. He did not know, till afterwards, that, by powerful interest, all prison rules possible to be relaxed, had been re-

laxed in his favour. He did not know that the honest martinet of a governor was in a state of indignation about the relaxation of those rules; and held, very properly, that there was no such thing as rank and influence in *his* republic. Austin did not know this. He did not notice, until he came out among the other convicts, that he, of all there, was the only one whose hair was uncut, and who wore his own clothes. Then he began to have a faint inkling that he was being treated leniently, and to think that they had done kindly by him, in not yielding to his wish. For he had asked them the first morning, when they made him go to chapel, why they would not let him lie on his bed, and die quietly.

It was a long while before he mixed with the other convicts there. The first night he was brought in he did not sleep at all. There was a booming in his ears all through the short summer night, and the power of connected thought was gone.

At seven he had dropped into a short uneasy slumber; then a great bell had rung, and the warder had waked him for chapel. He asked him why he could not let him die in peace? But he must come to chapel.

So he slouched in with a hot heavy head, and

slouched out again. At the door he saw a warder, and looking on him with eyes, which though dull and lustreless, had a momentary spark of ferocity in them, asked him where the —— he was to go next?

“To his cell,” the man said quietly, and not unkindly.

Poor Austin blundered on, he knew not whither, he knew not for how long. He knew not where his cell was. He went on for, what seemed to his fading intellect, hours. Through one long whitewashed corridor after another; at last there were stairs, and he went down, down, holding on by the balustrade.

At the end was an open court where many convicts were washing themselves; when they saw Austin they began whistling, and jeering at him. He did not mind it, but stood blinking in the sunshine, peering about him, till they all stopped whistling and talking, and remained quite silent—quite silent, poor wretches; for Austin, as he stood there in the sunshine, was a strange sight to look on. His personal beauty, always great, was rather enhanced by the fever-flush on his cheek, and the great passionate grey eyes were now, with the pupils enormously dilated, staring with the fixed look of incipient delirium.

Unimaginative fellows, these convicts. After a

moment's silence, one of them, as spokesman, said, "that cove's ill!" and this so well expressed the feelings of the community, that they went on washing themselves, and comparing notes about the Past and the Future; about what had been done, and what, please Heaven, would yet be done (in their line of business), leaving Austin to the care of the warder.

Austin petulantly appealed to him. "They told me to go to my cell, but I can't find it. They have taken all my money away, or I would give you five pounds to take me back, and put me on my bed; and I can't promise you anything for certain, because the Crown has a claim on my property; but if you will take me back to my bed, I pledge you my honour as a gentleman, that Miss Hilton will give you five pounds. It is all broken off between us now, you understand—and, perhaps, she has not used me well, but she will give you that. I want to lie down and die. Come, now, I would do it for you. We are all the same flesh and blood, convicts and warders, and Whigs and Tories. If I had taken care, and not broken God's laws, I might have been a warder, in time you know, when I was fit for it; and if you had gone out with the friend of your heart on one accursed May morning, and seen him tumble dead at your feet,

you might have been a convict. If I had been warder, and you convict, and you had come to me with your head whirling round, and ten thousand remorseless devils tearing at your heart, and asked me to lead you to your cell, to die in peace, I would have done it; by God I would! Come, now!"

Poor Austin! He was near getting release from all his troubles for a time; he was in the first stage of a brain-fever. The warder quietly and kindly took him back to his cell, comforting him with such comfort as a prison-warder has to give. He never claimed five pounds from Miss Hilton or from Austin; he never thought about what Austin had said any more. But his kindness to poor delirious Austin was the best day's work he ever did in his life. Austin was partly delirious, and never remembered one word of what passed. The man never told his own story; therefore, how came it, that after all this miserable business was over, in happier times than these; this warder found his private affairs inquired into; found that the inquirers had discovered that he, the warder, had started in life as a farmer, and had incontinently failed in consequence of trying some of Mechi's experiments without Mechi's money, and had been bankrupt, and glad to be made a warder at Mill-

bank? How was it that this warder found himself asked, as a personal favour, to come, with a salary of £250 a year, and superintend a certain model farm on a certain island? Which splendid rise in life was the consequence of his kindness to Austin on this morning.

Austin was delirious, and remembered nothing of it. He never told his story. There were none but convicts by. One of them must have told his story for him. Yes, there was one convict, a very young man, with a foolish, weak face, who had come towards Austin the moment he saw him come into the yard, and had watched him with a look of eager curiosity, who had heard it all. This young convict was the maker of that warder's fortunes.

CHAPTER XII.

AUSTIN got back to his cell, and somewhat regained his head in solitude. He lay on his bed all day, and a little after dark the warder before mentioned came in, and got him to go to bed.

He slept for a time, not, luckily, for very long. Then he woke with a feeling of horror upon him, a feeling that something terrible was coming. He got out of bed, and felt for the bell.

Round and round the room, from end to end; how damp and cold and strange the walls felt!—and where the devil was the bell-rope? His servant, he knew, slept in the room overhead. He was ill; it would be better to call for him. He called out,—“Edward! Edward!” many times, and waited to hear the door above open: but it did not. Confound

the lad!—why should he choose this night, of all others, to be out! He had better feel his way into bed again, and wait till he heard Edward go upstairs. He began feeling his way towards his bed again, but he did not get to it. In a moment the whole ghastly truth came before him. For one instant he remembered all that had happened, and he knew where he was. Then he gave a wild cry, and fell down on the cold stone floor insensible.

The warder heard him, and came in. He got him on to his bed again, which was a lucky thing for Austin, for if he had lain long insensible on the cold stone floor, in his fever, he would have died.

His fever was violent and obstinate; he was often delirious for a day at a time. He knew the doctor and the warder now and then. At the end of ten days he was still delirious, but he recognised some one who came to see him then.

Gil Macdonald, pondering about many things, after the last terrible famine winter, during which the Ronaldsay folk had lived on rotten potatoes, seaweed, and limpets; had gotten it into his head, that he must, as soon as he could see things a bit right, and save money enough, go south. South—from his barren, mountain highland home, where mighty men,

such as he, were eating their hearts in starvation and idleness—down to the rich country of England, where there was a career and fair play for all; where a “long-leggit hieland chiel” might find his place among these broad-shouldered, grey-eyed, thoughtful English, and be welcomed as a friend, not as a rival. Gil had heard the Mactavish call these men “Cockneys,” by which he, Gil, understood, a set of effeminate fellows, enervated by living in a warmer climate. But Gil was far too true a Scotchman to set his watch by the Mactavish’s clock, or by Christopher North’s clock, or by Professor Blackie’s clock; and so he had come to the conclusion, having heard Englishmen, who had come north, talking of England and the English, that they were a very manly and noble set of fellows; and argued, that if the English *were* fools, as some tried to make out, so much the better for him, who had a strong notion that he was not a fool. If they were the fellows he thought, why then it would be all the better to live among them.

Besides, Austin Elliot was an Englishman, and lived in England, and Austin Elliot was the one person around whom most of Gil’s hopes for the future grouped themselves. Austin was the most heroic and amiable person he had ever seen, and the

memory of him was, perhaps, brighter in the Scotchman's mind, than the reality. But he must first get south, and see Austin. If Austin could help him he would; if he could not, at all events Gil would see him again—that would be something. So strange was the admiration of this young man for Austin, he being in many points—not unimportant ones—somewhat Austin's superior.

One brilliant June morning he landed from the Leith steamboat, and strode wondering along the streets, looking at the names over the shop-doors to see for a Highland one. Having "speired" of one MacAlister, who was taking down his shutters, and whose personal appearance gave Gil the highest hopes, he did as he was told; he walked "aye west" for eight miles or more toward Mortlake, where Mr. Elliot had lived. He found Stanhope House, and rang, waiting for an answer with a beating heart.

Old Mr. Elliot, the servant told him, had been dead above a year; young Mr. Elliot lived at such a number in Pall Mall.

So Gil, resting a little, and taking a frugal meal at a public-house, strode eastward again, carefully asking his way at Scotch shops only—not that he was distrustful by nature, but only cautious; and it was an

unco muckle city, and a stranger didna ken. So he asked his way at the Scotch shops only.

Feeling his way, with many mistakes, he came at last to Pall Mall. Here he made his only non-Scotch inquiry that day. Seeing a handsome, goodnatured-looking young dandy, very like Austin, standing at a corner, he took courage to ask him whether or no that was Paul Maul? The young gentleman answered civilly that it was Pell Mell. This made poor Gil fancy that he had gone wrong again; he determined to trust none but his fellow-countrymen for directions. He walked on till he saw a Highland name over a shop, and went in and asked. He was right this time. The house at which he determined to ask was the very house where Austin lived: he saw that by the number. He asked the landlord, who was in his shop, unscrewing the breech from a rifle, whether or no Mr. Elliot lived there?

The landlord, hearing the dear old music of his native accent, took off his spectacles, and said at a venture, in Gaelic—

“He did live here, God forgive us; but he is fretting out his brave heart in prison now, my son.”

Poor Gil sat down. In prison. He remembered almost the last words they had spoken together at

Ronaldsay, and he felt as if the hand of God had smote him.

“ In prison ! ”

“ Aye, the weary day . ”

“ I have followed him all down from Ronaldsay, all the weary ! weary way, and I find him in prison at the end. Do you mean the same man as I ? Do you mean Mr. Austin Elliot, the young Saxon lord, with the laughing eyes, that were blue like Loch Oil, and Loch na Craig, when the wind sweeps down on them from Ben More on a June morning ? Have they dared to tie up the stag in the byre ? Have they dared to put the salmon in the goose-dub ? Had they dared to chain the scolding peregrine on the popinjay perch ? ”

Thus, in his anger, in furious Gaelic, Ossianically spoke poor Gil. Alas ! it appeared they had dared to do all this, and that there was no undoing of it at any rate whatever. His fellow-countryman had him into his parlour, and told him all about what had happened. And when Gil had grown calmer, they had together a regular good Gaelic palaver, towards the end of which this astounding fact was discovered—that Gil’s great-uncle’s second wife was sister to the Reverend David Macpherson, a placed minister, who had served Glen Ramshorn for forty years ; and that the Reverend

David's third sister had married the gunmaker's own uncle's third cousin, an Aberdeen stonemason, whereby it was as clear as day that Gil was the gunmaker's nephew. So Gil was good for a bed in Pall Mall, and, if need were, ten pound or so, for the rest of his life.

That afternoon Gil walked down to the prison, by the river, to see what he could do with regard to getting at Austin. And there he found Robin, as we saw. And when he had spoken to one or two of the warders, he came back again to Pall Mall, and brought Robin with him; and then, taking off his coat and baring his great arms, he set to work and cleaned guns, while Robin lay beside him, with his nose between his paws, and watched him contentedly. Long into the night he worked, a patient, intelligent giant; holding the creed, that a man was born to do the work he found to his hand, and that when the work was done it would get paid for in some form. And, next morning, when the sleepy apprentices came lumbering downstairs, there was Gil again, hard at it, having had a few hours' sleep on the sofa, in the parlour, with Robin. A true Scotchman—going on their old good plan, of showing what they were worth before they bargained for their wages.

This appearance of Gil Macdonald was very important for Austin, or I would not have dwelt on it. For, the fact is this, that Gil Macdonald was the only person who ever went near Austin during his imprisonment. Some cast him off, and some were prevented from going near him; we shall know who were in the former, and who in the latter category soon. Meanwhile Gil Macdonald was the one link between Austin and the world he had left.

The gunmaker, Austin's landlord, Gil's kinsman! was a west-end tradesman, and knew intimately some very great people. So, next morning, when Gil, after doing the work of ten men, proposed, at breakfast, the utterly untradesman-like scheme of adopting the plan of the creature Donald, in "Rob Roy"—to wit, getting himself made warder, letting Austin out, pitching the keys into the Thames, and then—and then— (that part of the plan not developed yet); at this time, I say, the gunmaker, seeing that his kinsman's notion of morality would not do in such a southern latitude, rebuked him severely; but, at the same time, bethought himself of a certain great man, a customer; and coolly waited on that great man, in his dressing-room, for

the purpose of showing his lordship the most beautiful pair of barrels ever forged.

When he got into the great man's presence, on these credentials, he put the barrels on the ground, and coolly told him, that he had merely used them as an artifice to gain an audience with his lordship. He then told, shortly and quickly; knowing that time was precious here, Gil's story; and made Gil's request, that he might be allowed access to Austin.

His lordship was very much interested and pleased. "By Gad, Macpherson," he said, "this is a wicked world. They are all leaving that poor fellow there to die in his desperation. I don't say anything about Edward Barty; but conceive that wicked little thing—that Miss Hilton—having had the indecency to bolt abroad, and follow that black-leg bully Hertford. It is utterly atrocious. Your request is granted to the full. Let this young fellow have access to this poor boy. You are a good fellow, Macpherson, and this young Highlander must be another. I will write to Captain Somes at once. Good morning."

So Gil Macdonald had the *entrée* to Austin, and he went to see him that afternoon.

How did he find his hero, his gallant young

gentleman, the man to whom he had meant to come, asking humbly that he might follow his glorious fortunes! He had found him at last.

Here he was, on the narrow prison-bed, in the half-lighted cell, in a close, dead atmosphere, which made poor Gil breathe hard, as though he had been running. Here he was, deserted by every one, all his beauty gone, with his great blue eyes staring in the madness of his fever; here he was, delirious and alone, crying continually for help night and day, to those who never answered, and who never came.

But he knew Gil, and Gil said, "Thank God for that!" He knew him even in his madness, and stretched out his fevered hands towards him, and said, how long he had been coming; but that now he was come, they would get away together, to the glens of Ronaldsay, and wander by the cool streams, among the green shadows of the wood by the waterfalls. And they would go together, up into the dark, cool caves, and watch the blue sea out beyond, in the burning sun; and he would bathe in the linn, and his head would get cold again, and then his reason would come back. But he would never come near the wicked town any more. His head, he told Gil, had got heated with sitting-up in the gallery of

the Commons so long, and hearing the weary debates. But that was all past and gone for ever. Charles Barty was dead, and they were all dead but he and Gil; and they, too, must get away to Ronaldsay, and leave the hot streets, and the cruel lying crowds, that haunted clubs and such places, and lied about men, until they went mad. They must get away from these into the mountains, and end their days in peace.

Gil told all this to the gunmaker and his wife that night, over a frugal supper. It was not told or heard without tears. Those three leal and trusty Scotch bodies made a compact, that though all the world had deserted poor Austin, yet they would stay by him to the death. Then the gunmaker and his wife went to bed, and Gil and Robin went into the shop.

Gil cleaned guns till there were no more to clean, Gil cleaned guns, making himself grimy beyond conception. Then he remembered that one of the apprentices had been ordered to clean a certain gun-lock, the first thing to-morrow morning. And he got possession of this lock, and a certain book, and pored over them both; while Robin lay with his nose on his paws, and watched him with bright clear eyes.

After half an hour with lock and book before him, Gil began to understand the difference between main-spring, sear-spring, sear, and the rest of it, as well as he would have done after a wet morning, in the class-room at Hythe. Then he asked himself what was the matter with this particular lock? Then he compared it with a newly-cleaned one, and came to the conclusion, that the sear-spring was clogged with oil. And then at twelve o'clock he took the work to pieces. This was a bold and remarkable action, but what is more remarkable, before half-past one he had cleaned that lock, and put it together again (which is not so easy a matter, particularly when you have no one to show you the difference between the Bridle pin and the other pins). When he had done this, he felt proud, and almost happy, in spite of his poor hero, who was raving there in his prison cell.

Almost happy; nay, possibly quite, for this reason. Gil had the great want of his heart, the great craving of his whole life, satisfied at last. He hardly knew it. He knew only this, that in Ronaldsay, he had always felt, that he was a man lost, and thrown away, a man capable of he knew not what, and without means of finding out. Now

he found that this gunsmith's work, little as he knew of it, little as he had done of it, was in some way filling up a void in his heart. The fact was, that Gil, for the first time in his life, had got to work, and he was as satisfied over it as is a dog when he gnaws a bone. The feeling of an Englishman, a Scotchman, and one kind of Irishman, over his work, is similar to that of a Turk over his pipe. It is a sedative. But in the one case, the results contribute more towards human well-being than in the other.

In spite of his late night over the work, Gil was tinkering in the shop before the two apprentices came sleepily squabbling down stairs. He went to Austin again that day, but Austin was as bad as ever, and was as bad as ever for many days. Still Gil was always with him. Gil grew grimmer and smelt stronger of train-oil as time went on, until the brave young kilted Highlander had grown into a smudgy gunsmith in a leather apron; all the romantic beauty of his personal appearance gone clean away to the free winds of heaven. Sad degradation indeed! That he, the untamed stag of the mountain, should condescend to this! That Gil, the idle Highlander, should develop into Gil the sage shrewd diligent

young smith! Worse still, that our taste should be so depraved, as to make us admire him the more, the more eager, diligent, and grimier he grew.

There came a morning, when the warders reported to Gil, on his visiting the prison, that Austin was better, and had gone to sleep. He waited till he woke, and then Austin's reason had returned, and he knew Gil in reality; not as he had in his fever, as only one of the figures in the perpetual shadow-dance which went on before his eyes, in which Gil's figure was only a little more real than the others. In a week from this time he was convalescent, and then they began to consult.

The first thing done was this:—Austin wrote to his attorney, Mr. Compton, asking him whether or no the Crown had made any claim on his property. He wrote a very cold, stiff note, for he was indignant. The old man had never come near him in his illness. His note was answered by the old man's junior partner, Mr. Brogden. It appeared that the anxiety and worry caused by Austin's trial and conviction, had ended by Mr. Compton's being laid up by a very serious attack of illness. Mr. Brogden proceeded to tell Austin that the Crown had made no claim on his property, and would *certainly*, he

believed, make none, provided Mr. Elliot *remained perfectly quiet*, and let the whole matter slip by. It would be better for Mr. Elliot not to communicate with their office any more till better times. Clerks would talk. Some of the newspapers had been troublesome over his case. The new secretary was very well disposed to Mr. Elliot, but they must be quiet. Mr. Elliot might trust them, and—

“The new secretary!” bounced out Austin. “Is Peel out then? Good heavens! Surely the Lords have not *dared*! But what does it matter to me?”

Gil felt horribly guilty. The fact was, that he had been so busy with his guns, that he did not actually know whether Peel was in or out. He felt very foolish, and spoke of other things. But that night, when he went home, he made his kinsman prime him with the details of the great Corn-law storm, which had passed so high over his head, without moving his hair; and next day was enabled to tell Austin that the Lords had not dared; that the Bill was law; and that Sir Robert had come to grief over the Irish Arms Bill. He was so busy over his gun-cleaning business, that he had not time to ask what Irish arms were. If he had been made to say what his notion of the Irish Arms Bill was, he would probably have

thought that it was the account rendered to Parliament, for certain casualties at Donnybrook Fair. After this he informed himself about politics, but on this occasion he was relieved, when Austin said to him—

“Gil, never let you and I speak of these things again. My imprisonment here renders me politically dead. I cannot tell you, because I have no strength to tell you, how hideous my silly boy’s dream, of succeeding in politics, without one single qualification, seems to me now. The Corn-bill has passed, and has crushed me under its wheels in passing. Let us talk no more of these things. I have to begin life again; I will, God help me, begin it in another spirit.”


It was all very well for Austin to talk like this to Gil, but it had not very much effect on him. Austin’s sad example was no use to Gil. His kinsman was a politician; and after his first inquiries into politics for Austin’s sake, he began making more for his own. He began to take a strong interest in the matter, and in a month could give his opinion, and defend it. His frame of mind at the end of a month was Radical.

Gil’s next enterprise, on Austin’s behalf, was to

go secretly to Wilton Crescent, and to find out where Miss Hilton was, and what she was doing. This was to be a very secret expedition indeed. Gil performed it with all his Scotch caution. But his caution was unnecessary. He, knowing nothing, bluntly brought back this intelligence—that Miss Hilton, with her aunt, her butler, and the rest of her household, had started for the Continent, the day after the duel. There was no one in the house but a charwoman.

Then Austin turned his face to the wall. This was the hardest of all. She had deserted him then! He could forgive Lord Edward Barty—nay, he would dread to see him. He could forgive his father's old friends; they had never liked him since he had turned Radical. But for her to have deserted him, and thrown herself into the arms of that dog Hertford! Ah! this was very, very bitter!

That she, who could make those religious pilgrimages, to such strange places in such strange company, could not have come to see him or to ask after him in his misery! If she had only sent old James! *Could* she have known that he distrusted her after that morning—that miserable morning before the last debate, when he had seen her in



company with Hertford? *Could* she have known of the cruel words he spoke of her to Lord Charles Barty? If she knew these things, it might account for her neglect. She might be angry with him; she might have gone abroad in a pique.

No, no! she *could* not have known it. She must be false, false! She must be falser than it is possible to conceive. And he, poor fool! loved her more than ever—loved, that is to say, the quiet, calm little woman who used to sit with folded hands in church—loved her, in fact, as she used to be—the old, quiet, patient Eleanor, who existed no longer.

He did not love her as she was now, then. Ah, yes! that was the bitterest part of it. Fallen, base as she was, he loved her more than ever. It was well that he should turn his face to the wall.

I have shown you, with most inexorable justice, all the worst points in his character. Most of them—such as his flippancy, his want of earnestness, and other faults of this class, which he shared with many young men—were faults of education. These died a natural death, the moment the prison-gate slammed behind him, and he was brought face to face with reality. But his worst fault—a certain jealous pride, showing itself outwardly in almost

hysterical anger—remained there yet. And now, before he rose from his narrow prison-bed, he saw that it was there, and set to work to conquer it.

He thought over his life, and he saw that fault staring out on two or three occasions, in a very ugly manner. He remembered Miss Cecil, and his furious anger at everything in heaven and earth, when he found out that she was to marry Lord Mewstone. He blushed at this, and tried to forget it, but could not.

Then he began thinking of the poor fellow who was dead, of poor Lord Charles. How often had he half quarrelled with him at school, when he had been jealous, because the dead man had been friendly with some other boy, and Austin had fancied himself neglected. How often, later than this, had he been fractious and rude with him, merely because their social positions were so different, and because he, Austin, was afraid of being called a tuft-hunter. He remembered now five hundred things which he had said to his friend who was gone, which he would have given the world to recall, but which could never be recalled.

Again: had he done his duty by that poor, dead brother of Eleanor's, at Eton? No, he had not. He

had been too much ashamed of him. He had been angry and indignant at that boy's very existence. That he and Lord Charles, with their sublime, high and mighty boy-aspirations, should have a boy given to thieving forced on their company: it had been intolerable. Now that he was in prison himself, he thought that, perhaps, a little more genial kindness, a little less high-handed patronage, might have saved that boy. But it was too late.

Lastly, he began thinking about Eleanor herself. The old Adam was a little too strong for him here, yet. For he *had* trusted her, as woman was never trusted before. He had let her go those mysterious pilgrimages of hers, down into this very Millbank quarter, dressed in her maid's clothes, and asked no questions. And at last he had found her walking arm in arm, in the lowest part of the town, with the accursed Hertford. He could not accuse himself here. Not yet.

And now she had deserted him in his trouble, and gone abroad after that man——

Still he recognised the fact that, all through his life, there had been a tendency to jealousy and suspicion, and he determined, even now, that if Eleanor could ever clear herself to him, that he would for-

give her, would tell her so, and part with her for ever. But still, could she clear herself ten times over, *his* duty was evident. He would never link his ruined fortunes to hers. If she had been penniless, it would have been a different matter. But as it was, it was perfectly clear it would be dishonourable, after what had happened, to renew his intercourse with her. The world would never hold him blameless if he did.

The end of poor Austin's illness was also the culminating point of his misfortunes; after this, his affairs began to mend—very, very slowly, but still to mend. When he rose from his sick-bed, and began to walk about his prison, there were still nine months of confinement before him. They were weary months to look forward to, but he felt he could get through them without maddening himself, now that Gil Macdonald was coming to see him almost daily. In his present state of weakness and depression, he tried to think, tried to hope, that, by mere patience, he might live on till things came right again. One thing only now was unendurable. Poor Eleanor was abroad, alone and unprotected, in the power of Captain Hertford and her aunt. That was maddening to think of. Badly as she

had treated him, something must be done there. He thought the matter over as well as he was able. There seemed only one hope. He got leave from the governor, and wrote the following letter to Lord Edward Barty.

“ MY LORD,

“ I know that we can never meet again as friends on this side of the grave. I know the horror and detestation in which you must hold my name, after the late catastrophe. But I beg you, in God’s name, to listen to what I have to say.

“ You used to love Eleanor Hilton. She is gone abroad unprotected. Her aunt has taken her away into a foreign country, where she will be in the power of the man who has caused all this misery, and his disreputable companions.

“ Now I ask you, who have so often knelt and prayed by her side, whether you will stand by and let this go on. If you have a grain of chivalry in your composition, Edward, you cannot, you dare not. I swear to you, Edward, deeply as I love you, if you, knowing what you know, stand by and do nothing, that I will cast you off with the same loathing and contempt, which you now feel for me.

Eddy ! Eddy ! for the sake of the love we once bore to one another, you will save her.

“ I remain, my Lord,

“ Your Lordship’s obedient servant,

“ AUSTIN ELLIOT.”

Gil had instructions to take this letter to Cheshire House, and to put it into Lord Edward’s own hands, and get an answer. Admiral Villeneuve had instruction to form a junction with the fleet of Admiral Gravina, and to pound and blast the British fleet from off the face of the waters. Neither Gil MacDonald nor Admiral Villeneuve were successful, and they both had strong doubts of their success before they began to execute their orders.

When Gil (having got off as much of his grimness as was possible) reconnoitred Cheshire House, his heart sank within him. The house stood a long way back from the street, and was fronted by a high wall, in which were two carriage-gates. In one of these gates was a wicket ; and Gil, after a quarter-of-an-hour’s watching, became aware, that this wall and gate were the outworks of the place, and must be carried, either by stratagem or force, before he could hope to do his errand.

He saw a great many people come and ring the bell. Most of the people who brought letters had them taken by the porter, and had the door shut in their faces. This would not do. Austin had told him to put his letter into Lord Edward's hand, and get an answer.

At last he opened his first parallel. He rang the bell, and asked to see Lord Edward. The porter answered civilly, but shortly, "Out of town;" and Gil retired and leaned against a lamp-post.

The thing had to be done, and must be done somehow. Gil only knew this much: that this was the house of poor Lord Charles's father; that the mention of Austin's name might not be a good passport there, and that he must be cautious. He was very much puzzled. If Austin had sent any one but a very cunning Scot, his mission might have failed altogether. But Gil, with his patient vulpine cunning, succeeded better probably than an Englishman or Irishman would have done. He had waited some time, and was thinking of doing all sorts of things, when the wicket was opened, and a fine boy of about sixteen, in deep mourning, came out, and walked away slowly along the street. Gil had heard the porter call him, "My Lord."

Gil instantly gave chase, and overtook this lad.

"I beg yer pardon, young sir, ye're no Lord Edward Barty, I'm thinking?"

"No; my name is George Barty. My brother Edward is abroad. Can I do anything for you?"

Gil paused an instant; but when he looked again into the honest face of the lad he took his resolution.

"Yes, young sir—I mean my lord—ye're a lord, are ye no? Open this letter, and gie me the answer to take back wie me; for he loves you and yours, dearer than his heart's bluid, after all done."

The boy opened the letter, and read it. He gave no answer at first; he bit his lips hard, and tried not, but the tears would come. Gil walked a little way off, and looked at the sparrows upon the house-top.

At last the boy came after him, and touched his arm, and said:

"Do you see Mr. Elliot ever?"

"Nigh every day."

"Are you in his confidence?"

"I should be. I am only a poor highland lad. But when ye, all of ye, left him to rot in his prison, I was the only one faithful to him."

"You are wrong," said the boy eagerly. "Others

are faithful to him. I am faithful to him. Edward is as true as steel to him. We know how blameless he was in the matter. We know that he followed this man abroad, and got wounded. Take this letter back to him, and tell him to burn it. Tell him that Edward followed Miss Hilton abroad instantly, and has been with her ever since. They are at Ems now. She is in trouble about her aunt; but don't tell him this. How is he? How does he bear it?"

"He has been at death's door, and no one nigh him."

"Poor fellow! Give him my love—George Barty's love; and say, we have not forgotten him."

Gil came back and reported all this. Austin was glad that Lord Edward was with her. That was very good news. So Lord Edward was as true as steel to him, was he? Perhaps. But he might have written a line to say so. As true as steel, hey?

"God forgive him!" he said, the next moment. "When did Lord Edward ever write letters, blind as he was from infancy. He *could* write in a way, so Austin had heard; but since Austin had known him, he had always dictated his letters to his valet. He would cast this miserable jealousy out of his heart once and for all. Edward Barty *was* true to him;

his delicacy had only prevented his writing. It was easy to find excuses for a blind man ; but who could find excuses for Eleanor? Why had she not written? Not one line ; not one short word to say that she had thrown him off. His anger against her increased day by day ; but, alas, his love for her grew none the less. He loved an *eidolon*—an Eleanor who never had been, except in his own fancy—a true, faithful, patient little being, who always sat with folded hands, whose face never grew animated, save when he was present. He had loved such an one, but she had never existed. Eleanor Hilton who lived, was false and cruel. Not one line all these three weary months. How wicked these women could be at times!

Poor Austin's resolution to uproot from his heart his fatal error of causeless jealousy, seemed to hold well enough, until he began to think about Eleanor ; about the very person whom he loved best in the world, and whom, if he had only known it, he had best cause to trust—the one who had suffered more on his behalf than any one else who cared for him. It was natural possibly, that he should be most jealous about the one he loved best, but it was very hard upon Eleanor.

She *had* written to him again and again, letters full of wild love, tenderness, and comfort. Lord Edward Barty had dictated several notes to him also, and inclosed them in hers. They had left them to go to post with the other letters.


But Aunt Maria's maid, acting under orders, had brought them all to her mistress, who had read them, and then put them all into the fire.

Eleanor's troubles began to get more heavy to bear than Austin's; Austin's silence aggravated them very much, she did not know what to think. Was he desperate, under his terrible misfortune, or did he know of her secret? He was in Millbank prison himself; could he know? She told Lord Edward everything. He advised her to say nothing; he was getting angry; Austin ought to have written.

At this time Lord Edward received the following letter:—

“DEAR BROTHER,

“I met a big-fellow, an awful big fellow, as big as old Hoskins, but not *so fat*, in the square yesterday. He spoke like an Irishman, and said that Austin was anxious for you to take care of Miss Hilton. I said you were doing so. He said that



Austin had been dying, but was well again, and that every one had deserted him.

“Florence has shoved the mignonet-box out of the school-room window, and broke the geraniums in the drawing-room balcony, and has caught it. Jim was sitting on the edge of his tub, kicking nurse, and the tub turned over him, and the water has gone down and spoilt the library ceiling. He caught it too, but not so bad as Florence. The houses are up, and we leave town to-morrow.

“Your affectionate brother,

“GEORGE BARTY.”

On the receipt of this they wrote to Austin again, but again Aunt Maria's maid was terrified into stealing the letter, and again Aunt Maria put it into the fire. What old James was doing at this time we shall see directly. But the effect of this wicked old woman's plot was this, that Austin thought they had both utterly deserted him; that he thought that Eleanor, at least, should have written to him; and that he was very angry, and very jealous.

CHAPTER XIII.

AUSTIN had never been moved into the hospital; the doctor preferred dealing with him where he was. After a time he began to get better, and was able to walk about.

At first he always waited for Gil Macdonald, and took his arm for a turn up and down the long corridor, and then lay down again; but after a time he felt the want of more exercise, and used to rise and walk out by himself. At first, when he began to do this he would wait till the long corridor was empty, and then come out, and begin his solitary walk. To show how villanously penal sentences are carried out in certain cases, I may mention, that when Austin began to recover, the governor called on him every day (under protest); and that if Austin, in his solitary walk, wanted the sup-

port of a warder's arm, it was his own fault if he did not have it. He was their Picciola—their “poor little thing”—their prison-flower!—the only innocent man among nine hundred. What wonder that they (officially) petted him? Poor, handsome, patient, innocent young gentleman! Yes! they grew very fond of Austin—they were just like every one else.

But after a time Austin began to feel the want of new faces, although those faces were those of convicts. One night, when he was getting strong, he lay on his bed and thought, and a strange thought came into his head. This thought put itself into many forms before it came to this.—Could not he, Austin, do some good, infinitesimal it might be, if he mixed with the other convicts? In the eye of the law he was no better than the worst of them, but he was still higher than the highest of them. Surely he might do *some* good.

“By merely mixing with them, and talking to them, we might raise their moral tone,” thought he. Speaking to them of higher things would—must—do them some good. One does not like to say that he was wrong; but still it becomes apparent that he had not acquired what we may call the Australian instinct—that is to say, did not know a convict or jail bird

when he saw him ; did not recognise the class of man as a distinct one ; did not perceive the extraordinary difference in appearance, between an honest man under a cloud, and a rogue. In fact, I am sorry to say, he came to the conclusion that he might raise the moral tone of the convicts around him by talking to them on an empty stomach.

He determined to go out into the yard and talk to them ; but he was still weak, and a little nervous ; and so, putting it off from day to day, he contented himself by walking up and down the corridor in front of his cell.

One day there was a fracas there ; it was only a few days after he was able to walk up and down alone. It was not a very great riot ; it was a loud dispute between a warder, and a tall young man in a convict dress. Austin, weak as he was, walked down to see if he could assist the warder. He found him in high dispute with the convict, and in the convict, he recognised the young man who had looked at him so eagerly, the morning after he had been brought to prison.

And as Austin looked on the young man, he had sense to see that he was not quite recovered from his fever ; that his brain had not quite got the better of

the delirium yet. However, he was far too sensible a fellow to be deluded by any mad fancies. "If a lunatic," he said to himself, "only *knows* that he is mad, and can keep that faith in his head sufficiently long, he may defy all the Masters in Lunacy put together." Austin knew that, probably, his brain was not quite right, and so he banished a certain idiotic fancy from his mind indignantly. He banished his first mad fancy, and took a practical view of things. Here was a young convict in high dispute with a warder. He would intercede for this young convict; would get hold of this young convict, and talk to him about Shakespeare and the musical glasses, until all the other convicts should come and listen with this one. And so Austin would elevate the moral tone of all of them, until they should become penetrated with an abstract love of virtue (for Austin, in his political creed, ignored the religious element), and so they should all become reformed; which meant, although he did not know it, that their foreheads should become broader and higher; their eyes should look straight at another man's; and they should give over fiddling with their buttons, when they spoke to an honest man.

It appeared that the dispute with this convict and

the warder was rather a strange one. The young man had been coming up to speak to Austin, when the warder, too zealous in Austin's cause, had turned him back. Austin thanked the warder for his kindness, and allowed the young convict to speak to him.

The young man spoke first. "Your name is Elliot?" he said.

Austin said "Yes."

"I knew that the first moment I saw you—that morning when you came out in the yard among the rest of us. I had not seen you for a long while, but I felt sure it was you."

"Then you have seen me before?" said Austin.

"Ah yes, often."

"What is your name now," said Austin, "and where have you seen me?"

"Then you do not remember me?"

"No," said Austin. "I had a silly fancy about you just now; but I don't remember you. If you have known me, tell me where?"

"I knew you when you were at Eton. Do you remember Tolliday's boy, Jim Charlton?"

"Yes."

"I am that boy."

"Indeed you are nothing of the kind," said

Austin. "Jim was a light-headed boy, your hair is black. What is the good of lying?"

"I don't know; no one speaks the truth here. I remember you, though. You were always kind enough to me; you used always to be with a young swell there, Lord Charles Barty. How I hated that boy. What has become of him?"

"D——n you," said Austin, "you had better take care."

As he turned fiercely on the man, he saw nothing but a look of puzzled curiosity; his wrath was stayed at once; and when he had looked at the young man's face for an instant, he considered whether or no he was going mad again.

"Don't get in a rage, Austin Elliot," said Charlton. "What has become of that cursed young prig?"

"Dead—shot in a duel. I was his second, and am here for it. *Will* you hold your tongue?"

"Yes, directly. One question more. What has become of that other fellow who was always with you and Lord Charles—Robert Hilton?"

"He is dead; he died three years ago at Namur," said Austin.

"May the devil take him," said Charlton. "I shall be out of this in six months, and I was depend-

ing on him. I know enough about him to bring me in a tidy income. So he is dead. Well, no loss, except to me. He was a worthless young scoundrel."

"He was nothing of the kind," said Austin. "He was half-witted, but he was neither worthless nor a scoundrel. How dare you speak so of Miss Hilton's brother? He stole things. He was half-witted, I tell you. What have you done that you are here? I'll tell you what, little Bob Hilton, poor little devil, was in some respects immeasurably your superior. Come now."

This was, do you perceive, the way in which Austin carried out his plan of elevating the moral tone of the convicts around him, by talking about Shakespeare and the musical glasses.

CHAPTER XIV.

AUSTIN grew to like this young convict. He had, it appears, behaved pretty well, and was a somewhat privileged person. When Gil was not with him, Austin used to walk a great deal with this young fellow, Charlton. Gil was glad at Austin's having found some one in the prison of whom he could make some sort of a companion ; he wondered at Austin's choice, but respectfully acquiesced. He did not like Charlton, but that was his fault, of course, for Austin *must* be right. Austin's heroic nature, thought Gil, though in other words, could not err : so he accepted Charlton.

The fact was that Austin, so far from having become less heroic in Gil's eyes, since his misfortune, had become infinitely more so. When he had found his hero in misfortune and disgrace, his hero worship only

grew the stronger for those circumstances. Pity, was in his thoroughly chivalrous mind, superadded to his old admiration, and made his love for Austin only stronger. But when Austin grew well enough to tell him the whole story, his admiration grew into a sort of barbarous reverence, combined with self-congratulation, at his having been shrewd enough to have picked out Austin, as the very man to follow to the death.

The fact of Lord Charles Barty having succeeded in thrusting himself forward into the quarrel before Austin, was certainly a distressing accident—but Austin's hunt after Captain Hertford, his wandering hither and thither after him, with the dread of his trial hanging over him all the time, his patient search after him, the cunning he displayed in it, his calm behaviour when he brought the wolf to bay, and his noble generosity in refusing to fire at him after all—formed, in Gil's Highland imagination, the most beautiful and glorious tale he had ever heard. I suppose that it is true, that heroic natures are apt to worship an idol which they suppose to possess the qualities they most admire themselves. Faithful, high-souled valour, were the qualities for which Austin was getting worshipped, and his worshipper

was showing those qualities, to a higher degree than ever had Austin.

Gil had made friends with the apprentices. They were two good-hearted, ordinary, English lads, who were not so much learning their trade, as having the details of their trade knocked, so to speak, into their heads. Gil Macdonald was a fellow of genius and energy. A Quentin Durward of a fellow; a man who would not consent to be starved at any price, and so had come South. The apprentices had asked "*Scotchy*" to have some beer with them, but Scotchy would not, because he wern't sure whether or no he could treat them in return. They wanted Scotchy to go to Highbury Barn with them; but Scotchy wouldn't. They couldn't make friends with him: Scotchy didn't want them to; *he* wanted to make friends with *them*. He did so; he appealed to their generosity; and it is a queer sort of English apprentice, who can stand *that* appeal. Gil got first one of them, and then another, to show him little tricks in gun-making which he did not know, and they had gladly done so; after this Gil would sit up half the night easing them of their work. Yes, Scotchy was a good fellow, though he would not go to Highbury Barn. So Gil and the apprentices got fond of one another, as English and

Scotch lads always will, if there is no fool by to make mischief between them.

So much for Gil; and he deserves so much at least. We must return to Austin.

This young convict which he had taken up, or to be more correct, had taken up with him, persisted for a long while in calling himself Charlton. He was a fellow of very few words, but when he did speak he showed some knowledge of educated society. He was, to a certain extent, a companion to Austin. He was evidently, thought Austin, not a gentleman, but he had seen a great deal of gentlemen. One day Austin fancied that he might have been a billiard-marker, and asked him the question.

"Yes," said Charlton, "I was a billiard-marker once. God bless you! I have been all sorts of things. I drove a Hansom cab once."

"Did you?"

"Yes. I drove one of the cleverest horses ever you saw. The horse had been in Astley's, and was almost like a Christian, by Jove! And one day, when I was in the public-house, a fellow hails my cab, and the waterman runs away after me. And the fellow gets in, by George! without noticing that there was no one to drive, and roars out 'Treasury!'

and away goes the old horse like a steam-engine, by himself, and when he gets to Downing Street he comes up short, and sends the fellow forward with the crown of his hat against the splash-board: and when the fellow gets out to slang the cabman, by gad! he finds there's no cabman there. Yes, that was a devilish clever horse, I say!"

"You can't expect me to believe that," said Austin.

"Why not?"

"Why not? I'll tell you. Because you are always lying. Why do you?"

"I don't know. If you tease and plague me about my lying and thieving, I will not come and walk with you any more."

"But you must tell me one thing," said Austin.

"Your name is not Charlton."

"No," said the other sulkily. "My name is Goatley."

"What, are you little Bob Goatley, at Tolliday's? I thought I knew you."

The other, whom we must now call Goatley, walked sulkily away.

By the end of August, Austin had recovered his health completely. Goatley and he were still together a great deal. Goatley always grew sulky, the very

instant Austin tried to learn anything about his former life, and at last he desisted from asking questions. As these few weeks went on, Austin talked a great deal with him. He so continually attacked, by scorn and ridicule, his habit of lying, that the poor fellow made some improvement. Before the end of September a great event occurred, no less a one than this.

It happened suddenly. It came on Austin and Goatley like an earthquake, or a whirlwind. They were both dazed by it, like two bats in the sunshine.

Goatley had told Austin, on the 26th, that there was a disturbance in the prison. He had taken not much notice of it. One of the warders, the last thing at night had confirmed it, and had stayed a moment and told Austin the cause of it, but he had nearly forgotten all about it next morning.

At eleven he was let out to walk in the corridor, and Goatley was there waiting for him. He told him, that in two of the corridors, the riot had been most serious. That the prisoners were all confined to their cells, except he, and a few others who could be trusted, and that one of the officers had been nearly murdered.

Everything was quite quiet for two days. At the

end of that time the cells were unlocked, and the convicts were let loose again to their exercise.

Austin was shrewd enough to see that there would be another riot. The instant that the men were let out of their cells, they began to gather in knots, and to talk and gesticulate. The efforts of the warders to keep them apart, and make them move on, were quite unavailing. The confusion grew worse every instant; the warders were being pressed on, and mobbed. They tried to get the men back to their cells, but they would not go; they were encouraging one another to violence, but as yet no blow had been struck. The warders were as one man to twenty. Affairs looked very terrible indeed.

Austin whispered to Goatley, "keep with me," and pushed his way through the crowd, towards the governor's lodgings. They met him running, five steps at a time, up the long stone staircase which led from the lodge.

"Stop, for God's sake, sir!" said Austin. "The slightest spark will fire the powder, now. Your appearance might be ruin."

He had paused for an instant, but he said, "I must go on, I tell you. My poor officers will be murdered. I must be with them. I have a company

of the Guards in the yard. It is a matter of a moment. Stick by me, Mr. Elliot, as you are a gentleman."

At this moment there was a shout and a yell from one distant part of the prison, and immediately, in every long-drawn corridor, it was repeated ten-fold. Eight hundred convicts had suddenly burst out into aimless furious madness; and there were forty poor unprotected warders among them.

The governor ran madly on towards the riot. Austin and Goatley ran with him. As Austin, who had met the governor, turned to follow him, he saw that the great gate was opened, and that a company of the Grenadier Guards was coming on, out of the sunshine into the semi-darkness of the prison, swinging steadily forward, with sloped arms and fixed bayonets. Order tramping on inexorably, to sweep away disorder, by the mere sight of it. He heard Sir Robert Ferrers give the word, "double," and then he was after the governor, with Goatley close behind him.

The whole of the corridor was filled with a crowded mass of angry, desperate men. Those nearest them had made some preparations for an attack on this side. So the instant the poor governor ran towards

them, Austin saw him felled to the earth like an ox, with the leg of an iron bedstead.

But before the man who did that had time to strike another blow, Austin was upon him. He saw, with the eye of a general, that this man was the only one there who was armed, and that the possession of this weapon might save the governor's life. He caught the man's arm in his, and, bending down his head, bit his wrist until he let go his hold; and then, with a rapid, dexterous blow, sent him tottering and reeling, and spinning round and round, till he came headlong down upon the pavement like a dead man.

He glared defiantly about him, but he was the only man there who was armed. The governor was sitting up, looking wild and mazed; before him were two men, both in the convict dress, fighting on the ground, rolling over and over. The convicts were crowding round these two men, and kicking one of them whenever he came uppermost; their attention to those two men saved the governor's life.

Austin had just time to notice these two men fighting, when the convicts began whistling in a sharp shrill way, and whooping, and yelling. In one instant were all gone. No one was left but the

man he had knocked down, who was snoring heavily, the governor himself, and the two still-fighting convicts——

And Sir Robert Ferrers. The mere sight of that kindest and gentlest of men, in uniform, with a drawn sword, had been quite enough for the convicts. Profound tranquillity was restored, even before they had seen a single man of his company.

All this took exactly as long to happen as it took Sir Robert Ferrers to double across the hall, up some sixty stone steps, and through the corridor. He rapidly ordered his lieutenant to see everything quiet instantly; and, putting up his sword, ran to separate the two convicts.

One had got the other down, and the one underneath was getting black in the face. When they got them apart, it was found that the winner was our friend Goatley, and that the other was one of the most desperate characters in the prison. Goatley had saved the governor's life; there was no doubt of it. The governor, weak and stunned as he was, called Sir Robert's attention to the fact; but Goatley was found to be in a state of wild feline excitement, breathing short and hard, thrusting every one aside who got between him and the object of his ven-

geance, showing the strongest inclination to go in, and, as Sir Robert said, "finish" his man. As they were leading the other off, Goatley made a rush at him, and Sir Robert, interposing, he and Goatley came down together on the floor, and Sir Robert's sword got broke in two; but he stuck to Goatley long enough to prevent mischief, and Goatley was marched off to his cell in a furious, mad, cat-like frame of mind, ready for any amount of assault and battery.

That evening Sir Robert waited on a certain great personage, with a note from the governor, and gave an account of the whole business. The great man told Sir Robert something which made him stare.

"By Gad," said he, "that is the sort of thing men put into novels. How very extraordinary!"

"Is it not?" said the great man. "But mind, it is all in confidence. It is best to say nothing."

The next morning an order came down to the prison, for the immediate release of Austin Elliot and William Browning. William Browning, it is necessary to say, was the young man, whom we have known by the aliases of Charlton and Goatley.

Austin slept late, and they would not wake him. Was it that they had a disinclination to lose him?

I think so. When he woke at last, the warder who had led him back to his cell on the first miserable morning of his imprisonment, stood beside his bed, and told him that the gate was open, and that he might walk out into the world a free man.

After several repetitions, he realized it at last. He tried to thank the man ; he tried to pray. He succeeded in neither. He laid his forehead between his knees, and did the best thing he could do—he sobbed like a child.

He saw the governor in his bed, and in bidding him good-bye, earnestly thanked him for his kindness. He went into the lodge. They were all waiting to say good-bye to him. He must think of them sometimes, they said. They did not like to say that they were sorry to lose him, but such was the case ; there was not one honest face left behind in that gloomy prison now. Austin did not know till after, that sooner than sadden his dismissal, they had kept from him the fact that two warders, whom he knew, were killed the day before. “ They were on duty,” they said. “ They would give Austin’s love to them, and tell them how sorry he was not to have wished them good-bye.” He did not know till afterwards, that he had sent his love to two poor cold

corpses, which lay under sheets, in the dead-house. No! they closed the great iron door behind him without telling him that. And he stood blinking and trembling without, in the blazing autumn sunshine.

* * * * *

A well-dressed young man was standing in the sun under the prison wall, and he came to meet him. Austin saw that it was Goatley.

"I did not know you at first," he said. "I have only seen you in your prison dress. You got your discharge, too."

"Yes. I thought you were going to cut me. I was only waiting here to say good-bye."

"Why good-bye?"

"We can never see anything more of one another. I am far too disreputable a person for you to know. Say good-bye, and let us part for ever, Austin Elliot."

"I shall say no such thing," said Austin. "You are coming with me to Canada, and there you and I, and Gil Macdonald, will die respectable old men. Come along. It were strange, indeed, if I deserted you now, my boy."

"If you had," said Goatley, "I would have been back *there* in a very few days."

So patient Gil, filing grimly over his guns, looked up from the vice, wiped his eyes with his big black hands, and said, "Gude guide us!" for Austin Elliot was standing in front of him, and bidding him good-morrow. And that same night, Gil took the two apprentices to a Scotch stores he knew of; and, at his own expense, made them and himself also, so very drunk on whiskey and water, that the outraged majesty of the law, required that they should be all three locked up at Bow Street, until they had purged themselves of their contempt. They were not back before eleven the next morning. But Mr. Macpherson was not angry; he only winked. And Mrs. Macpherson said, "He's no awake yet. It does my heart good, Gil Macdonald, ye daft devil, to think that he is back in his ain house again after a'. If all the world were like you and he and our gude man, Gil, why it would be no muckle the waur, hey?"

CHAPTER XV.

WE must leave Austin here for a short time; and this is almost the first time in this tale, in which we have left him. But we must leave him, and see how matters were going on at Ems. If sternest fate did not say, "no," we would have preferred to make Ems the place in which some pleasant genial story got itself wound up; in which every angle in one's tale was rounded off; in whose mountain meadows happy lovers met, and parted no more. But that cannot be. With all its wonderful beauty, it is a wicked little place. Under the auspices of the Duke of Nassau, the play runs higher than at most places on the continent; there are many men who curse the day on which they first saw its lovely winding valleys, and hanging sheets of woodland.

The morning of the duel, old James went off into

town on some errand or another. Towards two o'clock he heard the terrible news and brought it home. He looked so wild and scared, that his old enemies, the maids, grew frightened too. They forbore to tease him, or to laugh at him; but besought him, in eager whispers, to tell them what was the matter. At last he did so, and then they stood all silent and terrified. "Who is to break it to her?" asked one at last.

No one knew; it was a business no one would undertake. Even the very housekeeper, who had nursed Eleanor when a baby, shrank from the task. Lord Charles killed, and Mr. Austin in prison. God spare her from telling such news. At last, the youngest and most heedless of the servant girls, suggested that they should send for Lord Edward.

It was a good idea, but James would not agree to act on it. He said she must be told at once, lest the news should come to her any other way; and, after a long pause, he undertook to go and tell her himself.

He went up to the drawing-room, and found Eleanor alone there. She saw that disaster was written in his face; and she prayed him, for old love's sake, to be quick, and strike his blow. He did so; he told her

all, as quietly as he could; and then she fell back in her chair speechless. She never said one word, good or bad. She tried to undo the handkerchief round her throat, but could not; then she feebly clutched her hair with her hands, until one long loop of it fell down across her face; and then she clasped her hands in her lap in her old patient attitude, and sat pale and still.

Old James was kneeling at her feet, and praying her to speak to him; when he heard the door locked behind him. He started up, and Aunt Maria was standing between him and the door. Old James, valiant old soul as he was, grew frightened. She had got on her dressing-gown only, her hair was all tumbled and wild, her great coarse throat was bare, and her big black eyebrows were nearly hiding her cruel little eyes; she looked redder, angrier, madder, than ever. He saw that she had heard every word; he saw that she had locked the door behind her, and was standing silently scowling at them; and for one moment he trembled.

But only for one instant. His darling Miss Eleanor was there, and his courage returned; he faced her, furiously.

"Give me that key, you old Atrophy!" he said,

(meaning, possibly, Atropos; Lord knows what he meant!) Give it up to me, I tell you!"

"Come and take it, you old dog! You old thief! you beggarly, old, barefooted shoeblack boy! that my fool of a brother picked out of the gutter, fifty years ago, because you had a face like a monkey, and made him laugh! Come and take it! Do you hear?"

James was politic. Aunt Maria was decidedly the strongest of the two. He fell back on his tongue, which was nearly as good a one as Aunt Maria's.

"*Your* brother!" he said; "*your* brother! Oh Lord!"

"Put it in Chancery," she said. "Put it in Chancery, you penniless old rogue! Aha!"

James gave a glance at Eleanor, and saw that she was quite unconscious of what was passing. With infinite shrewdness he remained perfectly quiet, and let Aunt Maria begin at her.

She came towards her, pointing at her with the key.

"You little snake!—You little devil!—You little sly, smooth-faced, pianoforte playing minx! So you set on your two gallant bully lovers to murder Will Hertford, did you? He has given a gallant account

of them! He *is* a man! why his little finger is worth ten of your Bartys and Elliots! One dead and the other in prison! Oh, brave Will Hertford! Get up, do you hear, get up! you little devil!"

"Leave her alone," said old James; "or by the Lord, I'll——"

"Assault your mistress's Aunt, and be walked off to the police-station, is that it? I am going to use you, Master James, and when I have done with you, pitch you on one side, like an old shoe. I have won the game! Take this key, open the door, and send her maid to her. I have won the game, old snake!"

It would have puzzled Aunt Maria to say what game she *had* won. Originally she certainly was very fond of Captain Hertford, and was so still. She had had a plan of marrying him to Eleanor, and gaining some sort of power over her wealth: this had given her her intense hatred of Austin; but what with drink and incipient insanity, all power of keeping one plan before her, had gone long ago. Passion had supplanted reason. She loved Will Hertford still, in a way, and she hated Austin and the Bartys; she had nothing left to guide her now but a mad woman's cunning.

She displayed a considerable amount of it this day.

She went out, and ordered the maids to pack everything for a long journey, and shortly afterwards made her appearance, dressed in the height of fashion, looking quite sane and collected. She ordered the carriage, went to the bankers and got money, went to the passport-office and got passports; she went to Mivart's, got a courier recommended to her; went to the Hotel Sablonière, in Leicester Square, and fetched the gentleman home. Then she gave directions to the housekeeper about shutting up the house, and discharging the servants, and lastly, she sent the courier to secure berths on board the Soho, for Antwerp.

Then she went up to Eleanor. She was sitting near the window, weeping bitterly. Aunt Maria was in good temper now, and was very gentle with her.

"My love," she said, "I am glad you are better. In my grief this morning I used harsh words to you. Are they forgiven?"

"I know nothing of them, Aunt; yet, if you use them, they are forgiven."

"Are you better, dear?"

"I am quite well, aunt; only my heart is broken."

"Nonsense, everything will come right. Stay here. Austin will be liberated on bail, and will

abroad. We ought to go abroad instantly. Can you travel?"

"You can do as you will with me, aunt. Only, dear aunt, I have been so patient and loving to you, I have never returned you one angry word. Aunt, for God's sake don't scold me!"

"Tut, tut, silly one. Who is scolding? Come, we start to-night, bid your maid get ready."

The next night they were at Brussels, and old James made one of the party. It was his first expedition into foreign parts, since the taking of the Bastille, and his prejudices against foreigners were as strong as they were in 1792. But there he was, and there were three strong reasons for his being there. First, Eleanor had asked him to go; second, he was most fully determined that happen what might, he would never lose sight of Eleanor; and thirdly, that Aunt Maria was most fully determined that she would keep this dangerous old fellow under her own eye.

What could the old fellow do? His dread of what might be the end of Eleanor's being carried abroad, was boundless. But old Mr. Hilton had managed his affairs in life so well, that he had died, leaving not one single personal friend behind him,

but Mr. Elliot, and now *he* was dead. There was actually no one left to appeal to for help, but blind Lord Edward Barty. James scrawled a letter to him, and Lord Edward started on the trail at once, and overtook them at Brussels. Aunt Maria showed no disgust at his appearance; she was very gracious and genial, and kept her temper for her maid, whom she kept in the most terrible subjection, partly by her tongue, and partly by wielding against the unfortunate woman, a certain supposed clause in her will, susceptible of instant alteration; on suspicion of the poor wretch's having exchanged a single word, in confidence, with old James.

Aunt Maria found walking exercise necessary, and so she used to walk out every day, to take and fetch the letters from the post office, near the Place de la Revolution. Meanwhile, Eleanor had a piano in her room, and Lord Edward used to come and play it, and wonder why on earth Austin had not answered their letters.

Old James, both here and elsewhere, was far too much engaged in a vast, chronic, ceaseless squabble, with the whole Belgian nation, to be at all available for any reasonable business; his life was one great wrangle about the food. And moreover, he had a

most vivid remembrance of holding Mr. Jenkinson's coat tails tight in one hand, and Mr. Hilton's in the other ; of looking cautiously between the shoulders of those gentlemen, and of seeing all St. Antoine, seething, and howling, and leaping, and raging over the bridge, into the Bastile. He fully believed that people in foreign parts did that sort of thing once a month or so, and that the Place de la Revolution, where they lived, was the spot set aside by the Government for the performance, at stated periods, of the same sort of Devil's dance, which he had witnessed in Paris fifty years before, for a week or so. He had always been very particular about his money too, and now was worrying himself to death, from having to change good money, into coins, with whose value he was totally unacquainted. In short, the poor old fellow was in a totally unavailable state for all reasonable business.

When they had been there a short time, Aunt Maria expressed her intention of breaking up the camp, and going to Ems. She was the only person in the house who read Galignani. She read one morning a short account of the duel at Ems, between Austin and Captain Hertford ; she determined to follow him to that place.

Nobody opposed her, and they went. When their carriage drove up the street, Captain Hertford was standing by the arch, which crosses the street by the Kursal. When he saw her face, he cursed and swore so awfully, that Captain Jackson, who was standing by, said,

“ I say, Hertford, don’t use such language ; it isn’t good taste.”

“ I can’t help it,” said he, “ when I see that cursed old woman’s face. It makes me mad to think what she has brought me to ; I can’t go to England, I don’t care so much about that ; I must resign my seat in Parliament, that is the very deuce, but it isn’t that. It is that young dandy Charles Barty—I can’t get him out of my head. I wasn’t sorry at the time—I don’t know that I am sorry now—but he came down so sudden ; it was so devilish horrid.—Did you ever see anything more horrid ! I’ve killed my man before, but not such a lad as he ; it is always coming back to me—the brandy is no good against it. I tried that, and it made it worse, so I dropped it.”

“ I wish to God, you *would* drop it,” said Jackson fiercely. “ Why the devil do you go on harping on this wretched business ? What do you think *I* must feel about it ? ”

Captain Hertford remained silent.

"I beg your pardon, Hertford," continued the other; "don't let us mention that duel again. I should be very glad, if you would tell me the truth about your connexion with Miss Hilton."

"I will do so, Jackson—I think you are a good fellow.—Don't pitch me overboard.—I shall blow my brains out, if you do. Old Maria Hilton had always a great admiration for me, which was not reciprocated. But I always kept in with her, and kept friendly with her. Well! Hang it, sir, she bought my company for me. There!

Captain Hertford paused. They walked together down the terrace, which hangs over the river; but Captain Hertford had come to a dead stop.

"You were going to tell me,"—said Jackson.

"About little Miss Hilton; well, Jackson, if you had been brought up such a neglected Arab as I, you would have been as bad as I."

"I might be worse."

"Well, you *might*; however," resumed he slowly, "through Miss Hilton, I of course grew to be acquainted with her nephew Robert. He had been expelled from the army, for stealing everything he could lay his hands on. She asked me to see him, at

Brussels; I did so. I took him up rather, because I thought she was fond of him.—Never mind why I took him up. He robbed me of some letters belonging to Lord Mewstone, and got the signature copied, by a clever rogue, on to a cheque. Finding himself discovered, he bolted to Namur, where he committed suicide.”

“ A tender-conscienced thief.”

“ Yet he was well brought up: he was Miss Hilton’s brother; I brought the news back to England. There old Miss Hilton pointed out to me, that Eleanor Hilton would be a great heiress, and, that I ought to marry her; and so the scheme was begun; I went down to Wales; and found Elliot, the fool, falling in love with my worthy half-brother’s future Countess—I encouraged him.”

“ But, how went your scheme with Miss Hilton?”

“ Hot and cold, hot at first, and afterwards, when she paid my election expenses, very cold indeed. Still, I always had hopes; and the old woman kept them going. What led to this miserable affair was this: I got cleaned out on the City and Suburban, and some tradesmen were troublesome, and then, I went about and said that I was to marry her. I was very familiar with her. Well, I had a secret.—I

did not exactly *trade* on it; but I used it. I was a great deal with her; I am a needy man, and I talked about marrying her; and Elliot heard it."

"People say, that you had a plan to shoot Elliot; and to get the girl abroad, and that that plan got blown upon, and that you had out Lord Charles Barty instead. Is there any truth in that?"

"Yes, a great deal. That was the plan proposed to me by the old woman."

"It seems to have been attended with the most brilliant success."

"The most brilliant," replied Hertford bitterly. "I have lost my seat in Parliament: I cannot go to England; and if it were not for my wonderful luck at the tables, I should be very poor."

"Well, you have not told your story altogether consistently, Hertford. I could not expect you to do so. But at the same time you seem to have succeeded. You have shot one man, got the other locked up in prison (that is no fault of yours), and now the girl has followed you here."

"That is true," said Hertford. "The scheme has succeeded wonderfully. I wish to God I had never heard of it. I *am not* rascal enough to go on any further with it, Jackson."

"I don't think you could, could you?" said Captain Jackson.

"Why not?"

"She would hardly see you after what you have done. This lord was her friend, and they say she was fond of Elliot."

"I tell you," he said, "that if I were rogue enough I could make her aunt bully her into marrying me in a month. You don't know the old woman."

Lord Edward Barty and Eleanor had a very peaceful and quiet time at Ems. I believe that Captain Hertford was in earnest about not prosecuting the villanous scheme, which had ended in the death of Lord Charles Barty, and the imprisonment of Austin. But if he had ever so much intended to take advantage of Eleanor's situation, the presence of the trusty Lord Edward Barty rendered it impossible.

He was continually with her. He could not be happy without her. She, with her patient ways, had become a necessity to him. As for his falling in love with her, he simply never knew what it meant. He had loved his brother Charles much better than he was likely to love her; he at present loved his brother George much better than her; he liked her better than Lord Wargrave, and not so well as Lord George,

that was all. She was kind to him, and he liked her—nay, he loved her; but he thought that it would be much pleasanter when all this trouble was over, and Austin came and married her. Then there would be glorious times indeed.

Of course the little world of Ems—not an entirely respectable little world—talked about them, but I don't think any one was the worse for their talking. The two people whom they talked about never heard it, and so it does not much matter. Eleanor and Lord Edward were left in peace all that summer without much to disturb them, except their anxiety at not hearing from Austin.

Aunt Maria was never troublesome now; they hardly noticed what she did with herself. Old James called their attention to her first, after they had been there nearly a month.

Eleanor was sitting at the piano alone, in her great high bare room, trying some music. James opened the door very quietly and came in. She heard him, and turned round on the music-stool.

She looked ten years older than she had looked before all this had happened. She had shown her sorrow to no one. She had been eating her heart in secret; keeping her griefs for the long dark hours of

night, and showing a brave front in the daytime. She had been doing this months and months before this unhappy duel. Her hair had grey streaks in it before things came round again.

"James," she said, "where have you been so late?"

"I've been to Marksburg, to see they sojers a marching. They're a marching from St. Goar to Coblentz; pretty nigh two regiments on 'em. And I goes over in a boat to see 'em, and there they was, with kitching candlesticks on their elnets. Fine men to look at—ah. And then I went in over the way, and seen 'em playing. Lord, worn't she taking the money in!"

"Who?"

"*She*. Have she made her will?"

"Do you mean Aunt Maria?"

"In course I do. Do you know that she have won a thousand pound in eight days?"

"My aunt! Is she playing?"

"Ah! and winning, too. And so is Captain Hertford. He and she have had a tussle; acause he haint been to see her often enough."

This was Aunt Maria's employment. She was gambling desperately. One day in September the end came.

She had at first won, as James had told Eleanor, above a thousand pounds. Then her luck turned. She lost. She nearly recovered herself again; lost once more—began to lose terribly. She was more than five hundred pounds "to the bad" one evening when she went to play for the last time.

She had had a quarrel with Captain Hertford. His luck had been terribly good this season; he had been winning, and winning. She took her place opposite to him that evening, and for the first time cut him dead.

He won beyond all precedent. As he won, she seemed to lose in proportion; she wrote cheque after cheque. At last, when she had lost eight hundred pounds, she got up, and made a scene which no one there ever forgot.

She rose up, and in a sharp snarling voice denounced Captain Hertford. She called him an ungrateful hound, unfit to live; she screamed out before them, all the plot against Austin and Lord Charles Barty, and then said that he, Captain Hertford, had known all along that she was only an illegitimate half-sister of old Mr. Hilton's. She said fifty other frantic things, which, of course, no one attended to. The end of it was, that the gamblers

huddled away out of the room like a herd of frightened sheep, and left the terrible old woman standing there in the middle, perfectly insane, trying to bite at the hands of the two croupiers who held her.

After a time they were able to move her. They had a terrible journey with her to England. Her reason never returned. Eleanor got her safe home at last. Their old house at Esher had, as I prophesied, been taken as a madhouse. Aunt Maria, poor soul, was taken there, and there she staid till she died; always under the impression that it was their own house still, and that the other patients were only so many visitors.

CHAPTER XVI.

AUSTIN slept long the night after his release. He slept late into the day, like a tired child, and at last when he woke he lay still, waiting for the dreadful bell, which in prison had summoned him and the other convicts to rise from sleep, to quit the paradise of dreams, and come back to earth; to the cold, hard, reality of the dull, squalid, hideous prison life.

At first, when he had wakened to consciousness in gaol, he had always, for a moment or so, fancied that he was back safe in his old room at home; and that the past was merely a series of bad dreams: and he would sit up in his bed to shake them off—sit up and look round, to find his worst dream only too terribly true.

After a time, he grew to be cunning in his sleep; to know that he only awoke to misery, and so to hold

on, with obstinate tenacity, to the fag end of a dream, as long as possible, in order that he might keep it going until he was roused by that dreadful bell ; for he found in practice, that the poorest dream, underlain as it might be with the sickening dread of waking from it, was preferable to the waking itself, and to seeing the four whitewashed walls. The very stupidest old dream, a dream that he detected and laughed at while he dreamt it, was better than waking and seeing the prison walls around him.

On this morning he dreamt that he was hunted through Hyde Park by something or another, which was called 974, until he came to Apsley House, at which place he managed to rise into the air, and triumphantly flew nearly over the Green Park, leaving 974 to come round by Constitution Hill. He wished to keep in the air until the bell rang, but he could not. He came down in front of Buckingham Palace and woke.

He waited for the bell. That bell never rung any more for him—it rings still for eight hundred miserable souls, but not for him. After a few minutes, he began to see that he was in his old room again ; he sat up, and found that it was true. For a minute, he thought that the whole past had been dreamt, but the

next he knew that it was real ; that he had been in prison and was free. He fell back again and tried to pray, but the utterance of his prayer was swept in a whirlwind of passion.

He rose and dressed himself. His resolution had been made long ago in prison ; he rose from his bed calmly determined to act upon it at once. It was the result of long, calm thought, when his head was cool, and his intellect perfectly clear and unbiassed. He had said to himself in prison, "What is the right thing to do ? When I get free I shall be excited, my judgment will not be so clear as it is now. The resolution made now must be inexorably carried out, without reason or argument, when I am free."

What was his resolution ? Possibly the most foolish one ever made—at all events, very foolish, as are all resolutions made in the same spirit ; that is to say, resolutions made without the saving clause, "that they may be altered by circumstances and after thoughts : " these are indeed, if persisted in, not resolutions, but obstinacies. Austin had made himself a *non possum*, and he was going to act on it at once ; lest the *non* should be swept away and high-souled martyrdom should become a more difficult matter. His grand resolution was this—to see

Eleanor safe under the protection of the Duchess of Cheshire (who was very willing to be kind to her), and then himself go to—where? Why Canada! and see her no more: and he carried out his resolution most inexorably. He knew that she loved him, as he loved her, and he would not be so base as to follow her with his ruined fortunes: that was one argument, and the great one. Besides, she had shown her good sense and propriety by deserting him, which was another.

“Gil,” said he, sitting by the forge that evening, “I have been to see my attorney.”

“May the deil d—n a’ attorneys, barristers, and writers to the signet, and him first of all,” was Gil’s reply.

“Why?” asked Austin.

“Why!” said Gil, “why! After lee’ing till the deil dinna like to hae him, could he no lee loud enouch to keep ye out of prison? Being paid for his work in hard guineas and everlasting perdition, and then no doing it after all. Why? quoth he.”

“Don’t you be an old fool, Gil. Mr. Compton is as noble and good an old man as any in the kingdom. You will know it soon; you shall meet him.”

"Meet him soon! I'm no saying contrary. Life is short, and no man's salvation is sure. But I'll no speak to him."

"I hope you will, Gil."

"I'm obleeged to you; but there, as here, I'll choose my own acquaintances."

"Don't be cross with me, Gil."

"Cross wi' you. God forgive me! Cross wi' my ain master (ye'll no get a highlandman to say that every day of the week), cross with ye!"

"I thought you were. Look here; that Mr. Compton has watched my interests very carefully; he has been a very faithful friend. The Crown has not claimed my property, and he has taken good care of it."

"The Crown no claimed your property?"

"No."

"Have you got your own wealth back again? Has the Queen gi'en ye back your siller?"

"She never took it, God bless her!"

"So ye'll no want to learn the gun trade—so we'll no have to sit pontering here together, over the dommed old gunstocks—so all the happy days I had pictured to myself, are all blasted awa to the winds. 'Tis a weary ungrateful world."

: "It is nothing of the kind, Gil. Listen to me."

. "I'll listen to ye. But I did hope to see your lang white fingers grimed with the rust and the oil, and to hear ye say, 'we've done well to-day, Gil.' Born an aristocrat, die an aristocrat. Are ye never to know the weariness of thirsting for work, and the peace and happiness of getting work to do at last, master?"

. "Don't call me master, Gil; call me friend."

"The tane involves the tither, I'm thinking, or should, if I understand it right. Now, I'm listening."

"Then I will speak, Gil, faithful old friend. There are better trades than gun-making."

. "I'm no denying it. The trades of Prime Minister, newspaper editor, or keeper of a disorderly house, are a muckle deal more remunerative; but all three more precarious."

. "Now don't be a fool," said Austin, laughing, "or I won't speak to you."

"A fool! quoth he," replied Gil, smiling, and hammering away. "I thought we were Radical. If my master is going to turn Tory, and object to an honest bit of Radicalism from a puir working man, why I must turn too, and sing my last song, like a hooper in the death thraws:

' The Deil was aince a Tory,
Tory oh ! Tory oh !
But he heard another story,
Story oh ! story oh !
" Every gentleman now is a whig," says he,
" And each devil must dance the new jig," says he ;
" And Russell and Grey
Are the men of the day——"

" Where did you get that infernal doggrel ?" said Austin, interrupting him.

" My father's uncle's first cousin singed it at the Deuk of N——'s door, not long ago. They would no have fleered at the puir Deuk, had they kenned that his ain flesh and blude would turn against him. Say yer say, master."

" If you will let me. Let us be serious, Gil, Will you come with me to Canada ?"

" Hey ?"

" To Canada."

" Aye, to the world's end. But there before all places."

" There is a most brilliant career before us both there. I must not stay in England. If, after what has happened (I speak to you as the only friend I have in the world, Gil, and the best, save one, I ever had) : if, after what has happened, I should

stay in England, I must get thrown against some one, and that would end in dishonour. Let us come to Canada : are you willing ?”

He looked at Gil’s face, and saw that he need not have asked the question. Gil’s face was radiant. He murmured—

“Sawmon, and park deer, and muckle red deer, called wapiti, whilk they misname Elk ; and real elk, whilk they misname Moose ; and a rink at the curling in winter time ; and corn land five shilling the acre. And he asks me, will I go ?”

“I see you are willing. Let us go. Let us take that poor convict Goatley with us. Let us try to do something for him. Who knows what his opportunities have been, Gil ? Do you agree about that ?”

“God’s wrath should light on us if we left him behind. Poor creature ! There is good in him somewhere, or he’d no have stuck by you and the governor the day before yesterday. Canada, quoth he. And you with your wealth there. Think of the poor starving Ronaldsay folk, master : think how leal, and trusty, and quiet they have been through this horrible winter. It is no business of yours,” continued Gil, laying his hands on Austin’s shoulders, “but, for my sake, and it’s the only

favour I'll ever ask; help some of them over. I'll go bail that, in mere money, they will pay every farthing of which you advance; but that is only insulting you. *You* know what a grand work is before you. I see you know that."

"I do, Gil; and, please God, I will do it. Is there no nobler work than griming my hands with rust and oil, hey? Is mechanical work the highest or the lowest kind of work, hey? Would you have me cast aside all my education, and set to work cleaning gun-barrels, hey? How now, old man?"

"I was wrong; and wealth, in a good man's hands, is one of God's greatest blessings. I had a fancy, that you and I might have gone through the world together, as equals. And the fancy was dear to me, I'm no denying. But it is gone; you have nobler work in hand than gun-cleaning."

So he had. Austin had a grand life's work before him, and he did that work gloriously well. But neither he nor Gil knew where his life's work lay, at this time. It did not lay in Canada, ? but in a far different place.

"Gil," said Austin, "we will go through the world as friends and equals, though you may choose to call me master. We will go to Canada, and Mr.

Monroe shall send us over the Ronaldsay folks, and we will call the estate Ronaldsay. But I have something to do first. I shall have to go abroad. I must start to-morrow; I cannot leave England before I have done something. I must see Lord Edward Barty, and also, if it be possible, the Duchess of Cheshire. By the bye, where is Robin?"

Gil pursed up his mouth as if he was going to whistle, and said—

"It was no my fault."

"Is he dead?" said Austin, in a low voice.

"No, he's no deid."

"Is he lost?"

"No, he's no lost either. It was no my fault; a dog who will to Cupar, maun to Cupar. I whistled till my een danced in my heid, and I cried, 'Here! lad, here! The cow's in the potatoes!' But he'd no listen. He kept leaping up on her braw grey silk gown, and she kept bending down to him, and saying—'Robin! Robin! my own darling Robin!' till it would have garred ye greet, sir, to hear her. And he caught sight of Lord John Russell's grey cat (it was in Chesham Place, ye ken), and hunted it into his lordship's ain area, and ran between his lordship's legs, as he was approaching his ain door, and

misbehaved like any Tory ; and so he went with her, round the end of the railings, and into her house with her, and the door was shut."

"With her!—with whom?"

"With Miss Hilton."

"Is she in London?"

"I dinna ken. She was twa days ago. But with these here-to-day and gone-to-morrow railways, a body must be cautious in speaking."

CHAPTER XVII.

So she was safe in London ; that was something off his mind. He gave Gil long instructions to try and get hold of old James, and to cross-question him (a hopeful plan), but Gil was not required to act. A note came from Eleanor the very next morning :—

“DEAR AUSTIN,

“I sent James to the prison yesterday, and he brought back the news that you were free. Is this to continue? Are we never to see one another again?”

He replied promptly, and at once :—

“DEAREST ELEANOR,

“It is impossible, considering everything, that I should ever meet you, or Edward Barty, again.

Our eternal and final parting must come soon ; it is better that we should not make it more bitter by another meeting."

This letter was despatched, and, of course, there was no answer to it.

Eleanor wept bitterly and wildly over it, but she saw no remedy. She said that misfortune had soured Austin's noble nature ; that he was not himself. She must get speech with him ; there must be something unexplained. In an evil moment she read the two letters to Lord Edward Barty.

He was furiously angry ; he made her a scene about the matter. He said that Austin's wrong-headed, obstinate pride was below contempt. He, after all, had suffered no more than the rest of them ; and here was he, in his insane vanity, refusing to answer their most affectionate letters, until he was out of prison, and then sending such an answer as that ! "I tell you, Eleanor," he said, "that if we want to get our own dear Austin back to us, we must let him go at present. He will come to us in the end, my dear creature, but we must show him that we are angry now. We have sacrificed everything to him, and he treats us like this. It is monstrous."

"Lord Edward," said Eleanor, "Austin has been deceived."

"By whom?"

"By me. I have deceived him. He has found it out, and he distrusts me."

"Deceived him!—about what?"

"Never mind. I did it, as I thought, for the best. I fear he has great cause of complaint against me."

"Fiddlededee! I won't ask any questions, because I know something about your family history; but take a blind fool's advice—don't run after him. Let him come to you. He *will* come, Eleanor. Let *him* come, and make his explanation. Wait until *he* is thrown against *you*, as he must be in a week or so. Come now; trust me you will find yourself the more hereafter."

"But, if I were never to see him again."

"Pish! The very fact of your having his dog with you, will bring on some sort of communication. Leave things to time, Eleanor; he will come back to us, when he is tired of isolation."

This would have been most excellent advice, had it not been for this: that Austin was just now making every preparation for the start to Canada, and that

the getting no answer to his last note hurried his movements.

"It is all for the best," he said, "she is right not to answer. She is wise; it is my fault. She deceived me shamefully; and she knows it; she does not know that I love her, better than ever; my honour, as a man, would be tarnished, if I made her any further advances. I wish to God that her nine thousand a-year was gone to the devil. I wish she was penniless; in that case I would go to her to-morrow. But she deceived me, and she has nine thousand a-year; and the whole thing is impossible."

So the Canadian preparations went on, and Austin and Goatley took a lodging in the Commercial Road, to be near the docks, and to see after the shipping of their "notions."

Gil deserted the gun trade, and came with them, after a week. They were very busy. Austin was making great preparations; he was going to buy a great tract of land in Canada, and to introduce a new system of husbandry. He was not in the least aware that all kinds of agricultural implements might be bought in Massachusetts and Connecticut, cheaper than in London. So he bought away; bought implements from Deane and Dray, to the tune of hundreds;

which implements were the best in the world: for English use: bought, for instance, two or three broad-wheeled carts with Crosskill's axles, eminently adapted for macadamised roads, but hardly for the backwoods; and so on. But he was very busy, which was something.

One night, sitting gloomily in his lodging, in the Commercial Road, after having been on board the ship all day, he thought of his dog Robin; and a desire arose in him, to have that dog back again. The dog was with Eleanor, and he determined to go after it the next day. He did go after it, and he got it; and in this adventure, he, as nearly as possible, met Eleanor herself face to face.

He did not meet her; but if he had, they would have explained everything to one another; even that dreadful circumstance, which rankled in Austin's heart deeper than all:—his finding her walking with Captain Hertford, in Millbank. This was the fact, which made him so obstinate with her. He could have forgiven her desertion of him, he could have forgiven every thing but her deceit, and his discovery of it.

So he went for his dog. He watched at the end of the railings in Wilton Crescent, and he saw her come

out. The dog was not with her. She was going to church. He waited patiently till she came back, and still he waited on.

By-and-by, after more than an hour, the little grey figure came out again. Ah, Lord! How Austin loved her. Why did he not go up to her, and speak? Because the jealous devil, which he had made believe to banish, was holding high court in his heart.

Robin was with her now; he came out of the door like a thunderbolt. There were five sparrows in the middle of the road, at dinner. Robin would have nothing of that sort; he sent them flying up into the lilac trees and chimney pots, for their bare lives, and then he danced, barking, round Eleanor.

Eleanor was walking towards St. Paul's Church, probably going to Westerton's. Austin was standing behind the corner of the railings, at the south-west corner of the Crescent. He saw that the dog was going with her the other way, and he whistled shrill and sharp. "I wonder if she will know my whistle," said Austin.

She did not, but the dog did. He paused, with one ear up, and the other down; and his head on one side. Austin whistled once more. This time, Robin

came rushing towards him, like a race-horse; and left Eleanor calling "Robin! Robin! you naughty dog, Robin, come here, sir!"

When Austin saw that the dog was on his trail, and that Eleanor had not recognised him, he ran round into Motcomb Street. An instant after, Robin came tearing round, on the grand circle-sailing principle; (that is to say, that a circle is a circle: and that the nearest way from one place to another, is a straight line drawn between them;) combined with that of circular storms, which is, that you go one-fifth per cent. to leeward for every revolution. He, Robin, sailed on these principles, but violated both. The first, because he assumed himself to be sailing on a convex surface, instead of (as was the case) practically a plane. The second, because he did not allow sufficient latitude for his progressive momentum. The combination of these two errors, acting together, caused him to make too wide a circle in coming round the corner, and to bring himself against what we may be allowed to call, the leeward area railings of Motcomb Street, and to give a short howl, at having bruised himself against them; which last fact, would be better theorized on by Dr. Brown, than by either Maury or Reid.

By the time that Robin had picked himself up,

Austin was at the end of the street. He whistled again, and Robin came tearing on once more. Austin stepped round the corner, into Lowndes-street, and waited; he was safe here. Robin found him by Gunter's shop, and leaped up, frantically yelping in the madness of his joy; and Austin then and there, the street being empty, or nearly so, took Robin to his bosom, and hugged him.

"You never see such a queer start in your life," said one of the young men at Gunter's, to one of the young ladies at Miller's (to whom he was engaged) that evening. "*I* know him, and all the whole business; how he was in prison, and all that. And I see him come cutting round the corner like a lunatic, and I says, 'He's broke out, and the police is after him!' And I run out to see if I could get him through the shop, or upstairs, or anythink. And then I seen him hugging of his dog to his bosom. And well I knew the dog. He used to come into our place with the whole lot on 'em; Lord Charles, poor fellow, and Mr. Austin, and the blind one, and Miss Hilton, from number fifteen; and he used to chivy the cat into the window among the bon bons, and play the deuce and all. And one day he upset the table with Lady Dumbledore's wedding-

cake on it, and then there was the dickens to pay. *I* never see such a dog."

"And so poor Mr. Elliot was glad to get his dog back again," said the young lady from Miller's.

"He was *so*, poor gentleman; you never see anything like it. Here he stood, as it might be me, and there was the dog, as it might be you, and he catches the dog to his bosom—"

And the young man from Gunter's immediately received two sound boxes on the ear, as a caution that prose narrative must not be assisted by dramatic action.

The Canadian preparations went briskly on. Gil worked like fifty Gils; and Austin, partly in the novelty of feeling free again, and partly to extinguish thought, worked as hard as he.

He would not think: he would not pause. His resolution had been taken when his head was cool, and must be acted on now: so he was intensely busy.

Goatley, the convict, worked as well as he could, but that was not very well. He had a careless, sleepy way of doing things, which provoked Gil

very much. He never let Goatley see that he was provoked; for Goatley was a kind of sacred person to Gil. He was an unaccountable being, and he had played the man at the right time. Gil was kind to him.

Austin kept him near him continually; for he was afraid of his meeting some old companion, and getting into trouble; but Austin hoped to keep him straight till they got to Canada. He was an odd, wayward, unaccountable creature. He never gave Austin much account of himself, that Austin could rely on. If Austin pressed him too much, he became vacant and irritable; if further, a kind of dumb sulky devil would take possession of him, and he would hardly answer at all, or only in the most transparent lies, which he could see irritated Austin.

He at ordinary times spoke but little. Sometimes he would, after a long silence, break out with an abrupt question. After sitting a long while one day, he broke out,

"If I was in your place I should take out a large quantity of potatoes. May-be, they haven't got the same sorts there."

There was nothing more in this than the mere silliness of an utterly ignorant person. But there

was a great deal more in the way in which, after he had once started this notion, he ran it to the death. He got it into his head that there was something in it; and walking about the Commercial-road with Austin, he was continually stopping him at every potato shop, and making inquiries about ash-leaved kidneys, and regents, and so on. He was fully persuaded that he would make his fortune in Canada, by taking over new sorts of potatoes. Austin told Gil that the poor fellow seemed mad on the subject. Gil, replied,

“A good thing, too. He had better go mad on one single subject. Mad he is, and will be. He had better gang mad on ane point, than on a dizzen.”

“Do you think he will go mad, Gil?” said Austin.

“Deil doubt it! A’ this leeing, and this talking so and so, shows that his brain is softening. It will end in general paralysis; a slight dropping of the lower jaw, combined with occasional violence.”

“Who told you that?”

“Naebody. I just, thinking about the young man, ran my eye over Dr. Tuke’s book the ither night. I’m no agreeing with the doctor in all things, but he has muckle experience.”

Since Austin had taken his degree, he had con-

fined his reading to the newspapers. 'He changed the subject.

One day, when all things were nearly ready, and Austin had come to be as well known on board the good ship *Amphion* as the skipper himself; he took Goatley with him, to help him in stowing some packages. They worked together all the morning. When, at noon, they came out on the wharf again, Goatley said suddenly,—

“ I am going away from you to-morrow.”

“ Whither?” said Austin.

“ To a public-house. To the ‘ Black Bull,’ in the Commercial-road. I have business there.”

“ You will come to me in the evening,” said Austin, “ for you will not sleep away from your lodgings. I am so fearful of your getting among your old companions, my poor fellow.”

“ Is that why you watch me so?” said Goatley.

“ Yes, that is the reason,” said Austin; “ you are so weak and foolish, my poor lad. I think how much I owe you, and think how anxious I am to give you a new start in life, without temptation. I do watch you, and I will.”

“ Very well,” said Goatley, “ you are quite right. But you need not watch me to-morrow, I am going

to see a relation, the only relation I have, who is coming to wish me good-bye."

"You never told me that you had any relations," said Austin.

"I daresay not," said Goatley, sulkily, "but I have. And one of them is coming to bid me good-bye to-morrow."

"One of them?" said Austin. "You said there was only one just now."

"Never you mind what I said; you've often called me a liar. Don't you ask any questions, may-be I won't tell you any lies."

Austin knew enough of his man to let the subject drop. At noon the next day, Goatley left the ship, and Austin, going the same way, saw him walking rapidly up the Commercial-road.

"It would be mere charity to follow him," thought he; "I think I had better follow him. I do not like to trust him. Robin! Robin!"

It was time to call "Robin! Robin!" A marine-storekeeper's cat had been over to visit a puffing grocer's cat opposite, and was picking her way homewards, across the muddy street. Robin ran after her. She, like an idiot, ran away, and Robin, by the law of gravity, or some similar law, bolted

after her. The cat, not being able to make her own port on the present tack, in consequence of the enemy being to windward of her, put her helm down, altered her course four points, and made all sail for the nearest harbour to leeward, which was the pigeon-fancier's; and Robin, disregarding the law of nations, made a perfect Wilkes of himself, and chased her right into the neutral harbour, overturning a cage containing five-and-twenty "blue rocks" in his career, and at last succeeded in forcing an engagement in the pigeon-fancier's back-parlour, under his table.

Here he found himself under the guns of several neutral batteries, which opened fire on him and the cat, with perfect impartiality. The cat bolted up the chimney; but Robin, as in duty bound, returned the fire of the neutral batteries—that is to say, setting our figure aside, that the pigeon-fancier and his wife (who were at dinner) tried to kick him out, and that he showed fight, and snapped at their legs.

At this moment, when war seemed inevitable, diplomacy stepped in, in the person of Austin. Robin was rebuked. The affair was gone calmly into. Apologies were given on the one side, and frankly received on the other; and the whole thing

was comfortably settled. Then Austin walked away up the Commercial-road with Robin, laughing, with no more notion of what was going to happen to him than has the reader, perhaps not so much.

He went into the "Black Bull." He asked the landlord whether a young man had come in just now. The landlord said what sort of a young man, and Austin described Goatley.

"What, Browning?" said the landlord. Austin had never heard of him by that name, but felt sure of his man, because the landlord had recognized him from his description. The reader will most probably not remember, that this was the name given by the Secretary of State to the convict Goatley.

Austin said "Yes," feeling sure of his man. The landlord said that he was there; that he was going to Canada, and that one of his relations had come to bid him good-bye; they were in an inner parlour now.

Austin was glad to find that Goatley had not deceived him. He told the landlord that he would go inside, and take a glass of ale and a biscuit, and wait for the young man.

So mine host showed him into a rambling old room on one side of a passage, with some fifty angles

in it. There was a bagatelle-board there, and Austin ate his biscuit and sipped his ale, and knocked the balls about. Robin had some biscuit, and lay down on the hearthrug.

Austin began to be aware that there were voices talking low in another room—in the room on the other side of the passage. Robin became aware of it too, and began to be naughty.

At first he only put his nose against the door and whined. Austin went on knocking the bagatelle-balls about, and making the most wonderful strokes. He got petulant with Robin, and ordered him to lie down; but Robin would not: he reared himself up against the door and scratched at it.

Austin made a beautiful stroke: there never was such a stroke. Some of these bagatelle-boards were very good. He was placing the balls to see if he could do it again, when Robin reared up against the door, and began barking.

Austin hit him a tap with the cue. But it was no use: the dog was mad. He did not mind the blow. He began barking furiously, and tearing at the door with his teeth.

Austin d——d him, and opened the door for him. The dog dashed across the passage, and threw him-

self against a door on the other side, which burst open. Austin followed to apologise.

Only two steps. There he stood like a stone image in the squalid passage, with the billiard-cue in his hand.

He saw a public-house parlour before him, and a dirty table, and a picture of the Queen, and a horse-hair sofa. And on that sofa sat Eleanor Hilton, and beside her the convict Goatley. The convict had his arm round Eleanor's waist, and Eleanor was tenderly smoothing his close-cropped hair with her hand.

He was amazed for one instant—only for one. When Goatley turned his head towards him, attracted by the sudden entrance of Robin, Austin saw it all. Now he understood Eleanor's mysterious pilgrimages; now he knew her secret; now he knew why he had found her walking with Captain Hertford on the 15th of May; now he knew why he had thought himself mad when he had first seen this man in prison. All the truth came to him suddenly like a blaze of lightning on a dark night: when Goatley turned his face towards him, and he saw it beside Eleanor's, he understood everything. This Goatley, this convict, was Robert Hilton—the thief at school, the swindler in the army, the forger of

Lord Mewstone's name. It was Robert Hilton, Eleanor's own brother. And he dropped the billiard-cue, and cried out like a strong man in pain, "Eleanor! Eleanor! I see it all. Can you forgive me? can you ever forgive me?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE was no great need of explanations after this ; for there was but little to be explained. In the happy peace which he felt in having her beside him once more, he never thought of asking her, why she had deserted him. That had been the thing which had angered him more than any ; but it was nothing now. She had run into his arms with a low glad cry when she had seen him ; and he was sitting with her, with her hand in his. He was listening to her dear, dear, voice again. Explanation !—one half of her conduct had been explained ; if she could not explain the other—why then—what mattered it. He had got her back again, what cared he for explanations.

She opened the question. “Why did you never answer my letters, dear Austin?”

“Your letters, faithless woman ! why did you never write to me ?”

"Edward Barty and I wrote to you, until hope was dead, Austin. Did they all arrive during your fever? The governor has not dared to suppress them."

"The governor dare do a great many things, Eleanor. He dared to run unarmed among eight hundred outcasts for instance. I don't know whether he dare suppress my letters; but I know that he would not, if he dare."

They were much too happy to think about the mystery. They found it all out afterwards. Aunt Maria's maid confessed everything when taxed with it, and threw herself on the ground and prayed for forgiveness, let her hair down, kicked her shoes off, made them a lady's maid's scene about it; and being forgiven, was carried off whooping and plunging, and holding on tight by everything she could get hold of. And after her departure, when old James came back into the room to pick up her shoes and her hair pins, and so on; he looked very much ashamed of himself, and confessed that *she*, meaning poor Aunt Maria, had been "too many for him."

Robert's statement was this, as far as they could trust it. He said that when he ran off to Namur (he would not go into particulars), Captain Hertford followed him. That he told a friend of

his (Robert Hilton's) to spread a report of his suicide. That his friend met Captain Hertford and told him. That Captain Hertford had without making any further inquiries returned to Brussels. And also that Captain Hertford was uncommon glad not to see him (Robert Hilton) in the dock.

This was all Austin ever got out of him : from this he formed the theory, that there was something "queer," some gambling transaction, or something of that sort, between Robert Hilton and Captain Hertford. He never proved it, and poor Hilton getting more stupid every day, now never told him ; but he thought that it was the case. Another thing which puzzled Austin was this, did Captain Hertford ever really *believe* that Robert Hilton was dead ? That puzzle was never solved either.

Eleanor's statement was this : Captain Hertford had returned from abroad and brought the news of her brother's death at Namur. Aunt Maria introduced him as an old friend. She had seen him a good deal from that time (summer of 1844) until October, 1845. Then one day he came and told them not only that her brother was alive, but that he was in Millbank for swindling. That Lord Mewstone was a most vindictive man, and that the secret of Robert

Hilton's existence should be kept from him. He was very vindictive about that forgery for instance.

Eleanor and Austin, when they came to think about it, were of opinion that Captain Hertford was very anxious that Robert Hilton should not appear in the dock in the matter of the Mewstone forgery. They may have done him an injustice, they never made out anything clearly against him here.

Eleanor, hearing this terrible news, determined that her brother should be free and out of the way, before she consented to marry Austin. It would have been such a death-blow to all his high hopes, to marry a convict's sister. She kept the secret from him out of mere love and consideration for him. No one knew the secret but Aunt Maria, Eleanor, old James, and Captain Hertford. She used to go and visit the poor fellow once a month, on the fifteenth of each month ; and Hertford, who seems to have pitied her at one time, sometimes went ; it was on returning from one of these expeditions that Austin met her, holding Captain Hertford's arm.

Yes, everything was explained. The black cloud had passed suddenly, and beyond lay the prospect of the future, glorious and golden ; peaceful beneath the calm summer's sun.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Austin left Ronaldsay in May, 1845, the potatoes were just coming out of the ground, and the women and children, in the lengthening spring evenings, were weeding them, and opening the earth between the rows, and regarding them complacently. The rich dark green leaves were showing handsomely above the dark ground. It made one's heart swell with thankfulness, to see the noble promise of a harvest. The old wives no longer knitted, looking towards the sea, where the good man and brave young sons and husbands were toiling at their weary fishing, but they took their knitting into the potato yard, and watched here how the plants came on. And little Ronald, and little Donald, and little Elsie, and little May, gave over paddling at the pier-end, and came home and weeded the potatoes, and made

believe that they were sorting the lilies and roses in the MacTavish's grand garden, at Glen Stora Castle, away yonder in Argyleshire.

Sweet summer settled down upon the island. The old folks had ease from their chronic rheumatism ; the young men stayed late on the quay, and the young women stayed with them. Elspeth, the beauty of the island, did not bring the cows home by herself now ; when she came down the glen there was always some one with her :

“ A voice talked with her 'neath the shadows cool
More sweet to her than song.”

The potatoes throve bravely. Before you were prepared for it, the plants were a foot high, covered with purple and white blossom. And the children gathered them ; the purple ones were my Leddy MacTavish's roses, and the white ones were the lilies which the Saints in heaven carried in their hands before the Throne, ye ken.

It was a pleasant summer, and the potato harvest promised bravely. For years the island had not been so merry ; there was but one anxious face on it, and that was Mr. Monroe's. He had been warned of something, which the others knew not of. Night

after night, he wrestled with God in prayer ; not for himself, ah, no ! but for those, whom God had given him. He prayed, that if it were possible the cup might pass away ; and it did pass away after they had drank of it. Through the darkest hour of it all the good man's faith in God, never wavered for one instant, and he lived to know how much wiser God was than he.

The minister had a trouble on his mind ; they could all see that. The older Christians would have had him unburden his mind to them, but he would not : they were content. He was a sainted man ; he was one of God's elect ; they were content, though they would have liked to share his secret sorrow with him.

One day in July, he went to see one of the oldest of his flock ; a very old woman, with a very quiet beautiful face : a woman who was so calmly assured of her salvation, that Heaven had began with her in this world. I talked with such a woman in the West, last year, and very awful and beautiful that talk was ; although the doctrines which she held, were as far apart from my own, as the poles.

Mr. Monroe found the old woman sitting in the sun, knitting, and looking at the potatoes. The

children were busy weeding them, all except baby, who desired to weed with the rest of them, but who was too confused in his mind, as to which were the potatoes, and which were the weeds, to be trusted. He had been accommodated with a horn spoon, and a crab's-shell with a string let into it, which served for a cart; and left to the care of the colley bitch.

"God save you, minister!" said the old woman, in Gaelic. "Will this brave weather not serve to raise the cloud from your brow? Am not I worthy to share the secret trouble which makes wrinkles on the forehead of one whom I shall wait to welcome in Heaven?"

"Why should you share it?" said Mr. Monroe, in the same language; "why should I darken the glorious evening of such a life as yours, before the sunset comes? I will not. For sixty years you have known nothing but poverty and hard work; your husband, your son, and two of your grandsons, have sailed away, and the sea has devoured them. Shall I throw a shadow over the few days which remain between you and your rest? No."

"There is a cloud in the heaven somewhere," said the old woman; "your eyes are younger than mine, and you see it, though I do not. It will burst over

Ronaldsay, I know that by your face. Minister, I would be sorry to take my reward before my labour was done. Let me share your sorrow. The tide flows up and down the Kyle, as of old, and the full moon floods the creeks and caves under the cape; Benmore stands firm in the West. What is your sorrow, minister?"

"I cannot tell you."

"See the brave potatoes. Raise the cloud from your brow, minister, and look at them. The bravest crop for years. Raise the cloud from your brow, and thank the Lord with me. See, they are harvesting*, already."

"Harvesting!"

"Go and see."

He went in among the potatoes. The children had done weeding, and were making nosegays of the potatoe flowers.

"Here's minister! See here, sir, these ones are the French roses from my lady's garden at Glenstora, and these white ones are the lilies of heaven. 'Tis a braw game, minister, is it no?"

* Harvesting. This is the expression we use in Hampshire when the halm of the potatoe turns yellow, and it is ripe. I do not know the Scotch term; certainly not the Gaelic.

Mr. Monroe looked at the potato halm. The potatoes were harvesting with a vengeance: the leaves were getting yellow and curling up black at the edges. He clasped his hands together and said, "Thy will be done, O Lord !"

Mr. Monroe had been warned of this. He had hoped and hoped, and even now he continued to hope. They dug their potatoes up. One half of them were rotten, the rest rotted in the places where they were stored ; "graves," as we call them in England. At first they hoped that they might pull through the winter and have seed for next year. That hope soon left them ; in the first week in November potatoes were cheaper in Ronaldsay than any one could recollect. They were all in their little market at once. But at the end of the month, when the leading Protectionist was trying to deny the whole business, there were no potatoes whatever. The potato crop had failed.

I should like to meet with a poet who would make *that* a line in one of his poems. "The potatoe crop had failed." How we should laugh at him ! A potato is ridiculous enough, but a rotten potato—bah !

All through November the south wind poured

steadily up through the Kyle, and filled Ronaldsay with mist and gloom. But in the first week in December, when the days were getting towards their shortest, the North wind came down, drove the mists away, and invested the island with a cold, cruel, merciless beauty. Under an inexorable brazen sky, every crag came out clear and sharp as crystal, every cataract was turned into a glacier, every little spouting burn on the hillside, into a beautiful ice palace. The lochs were frozen three feet thick; but the curling-stones lay neglected under the bed-place, and the faded ribands upon the handles only served to remind the young men of the merry rinks last year, before the potatoes rotted, and left them all starving.

The old folks died first. That was as it should be. One could not complain at that; one might envy them, but one could not complain. They had had sixty years of this sort of thing, and it was hard if they were not to enter into their rest, before the misery grew to its full head. The loss of the dear old faces at the fireside was very sad, and the hearts of those who were left behind starving ached sorely; but God had taken them from the misery, which grew more terrible as the winter went on, and He knew best.

Then the children began to die, and this was very bitter—very, very hard to bear. The bonny bare-legged little things, who had done no wrong; who paddled in the surf, that made wreaths of those infernal potato-flowers, and called them the lilies of heaven. This would not do to think of. To be locked up here in an island in the Atlantic, without one chance of making one's voice heard till it was too late, and to see one's own bonny darlings dying before one's face! Hush! It was well for the MacTavish that these men were Scotchmen, not Irishmen! It was well for the peace of the kingdom that these things happened in Ronaldsay and Lewis, and not in Manchester and Birmingham.

'Twas a weary Halloween for the poor souls. The men who dug the graves noticed that day by day the frost got deeper into the earth. The fishing-lines froze like wires, the blocks refused to run, the sails were stiff as boards, and the women who wearily, with blue fingers, knocked the limpets off the rocks, to save themselves from starvation, began to notice that even the salt water in the little pools among the rocks was beginning to freeze. And they came home and told the men, and the men lost heart, and went no more a-fishing. How could

they? Did *you* ever sit hour after hour fishing, with fourteen degrees of frost, and in a state of starvation? The men stayed at home, and lay in the bed-places.

And then *they* began to die. Yes! The oldest of the able-bodied men, began to lie down, and to fall asleep, in a strange quiet way. Perfectly happy, perfectly calm. They would lie for a day or two, and at last give over speaking. In the morning they would be found quietly dead, without the sign of a spasm on their faces. This is no novelist's fancy; the author has seen what he is describing.

All this time, the island lay in the bright brazen sunshine, more beautiful than ever. The ducks and the snipes had fled southward; the curlew and the peewit had followed them, and the moor was silent. But for the shadows of the crags and corries, which sloped so long towards the north; and for the fantastic glaciers on the hill side, which in summer time were wimpling burns; one might have fancied, if one only used the sense of sight, that it was spring-time; the island had never looked more beautiful. After Christmas, it got a new and more awful beauty. The wind was still steady, and quiet from the north; but one day, Gil Macdonald pointed out to Mr. Monroe and the

MacTavish, a long low light brown line of cloud, which was backing the lower summits of the Argyle-shire hills, to the south east.

For two days, the dun vapour had grown and spread until it had obscured the sun. When it had fairly disappeared, a broad red orb, into the snow cloud ; Gil Macdonald, said, " I'm wishing you good day, old friend, belike I'll never see ye again."

In the morning, the wind, which was in front of the dull cloud, begun to blow. The thermometer rose to six degrees of frost, and there stayed, and would come no higher, in spite of the south-east wind. Then the edge of the cloud reached them, and the dust at the corner of the little street in the village begun to grow white ; and soon after, the air was filled with straying crystals of snow, which rose and fell, and whirled about, and was driven into every cranny and corner. And those who looked towards Ben More, saw that the towering peak was rapidly growing from brown to grey, and from grey to silver.

For two days, the snow came down ; and then the north wind came down once more, and laid his deadly icy hand on the island. The sky was clear again ; blue over head, but a gleaming yellow towards the horizon. Ben More towered up over the vast sheets

of snow, which covered the island; a tall peak of ghastly white, barred with lines of purple crag.

The moment the snow cloud cleared, Mr. Monroe started Gil Macdonald over the hill, through the snow, with provisions to an outlying family at Loch na Craig, on the other side of the mountain. The wind which had come up with the snow had been strong, and the south-east side of the mountain was pretty bare. Gil, the lion-hearted, made brave weather of it till he came to the shoulder of the mountain, which overlooks Loch na Craig. But his feet went the swifter, in consequence of an anxiety which had taken possession of him.

He reached the shoulder of the hill, and looked over into the corrie of Loch na Craig. Then, he sat down on a rock. He saw the whole horrible disaster.

The snow, which they, looking from the south-east, from the windward side of the mountain, had seen eddying, and curling, and fuming before the wind; which they had seen blown from the steep side of the mountain nearest to them; had all settled down here, in this corner of Loch na Craig. All that Gil saw before him, was a vast amphitheatre of smooth white snow; and in the centre, a patch of green ice, about

an acre in extent. The sloping sides of snow represented the noble corrie; and the acre of ice, showing in the middle, was all that was to be seen of the five hundred acres of the beautiful Loch na Craig.

He saw that a terrible disaster had befallen. One little farm, near the head of a little glen, he thought, he would force his way to; the chimney was yet showing above the snow. Alone, fearless of the deadly snow sleep, bare-legged in the freezing snow; he forced himself to the door of that little farm house, and getting no answer, he broke it in.

They were all dead. The old folks and the children had died before, and now the younger men and women had followed them. All dead. This same accident had happened before. Corrie na Craig had been filled with snow; but then, the huts had been full with oatcake and whiskey, and the people had lived to make a joke of it. But now, the peat was still smouldering on the hearth, and Gil found six of them dead. These people had died more from starvation than from cold; and there were three other families down by the loch, buried fifty feet deep.

Gil called out, "was any one alive?" first in a low tone, and afterwards, when not so scared at the

sound of his own voice, in a louder. He got no answer. He sped away to the village, and told Mr. Monroe, and the MacTavish, that there were forty less souls on the island, to starve.

Austin's fifty pounds had done good service at the beginning of the famine. It was as nothing among a population of two thousand, in a state of absolute destitution, but still it was a great god-send. Mr. Monroe hoped for all sorts of things, for a mild winter, for Government assistance, nay, "God forgie him," for the death of the dowager, Mrs. MacTavish, who had retired to Clapham, near London, and whose death would put another £800 a year at the MacTavish's disposal. But it was no use hoping. Austin's fifty pounds was gone, and things got worse and worse, and he wrote to the MacTavish to come to him at once.

MacTavish came instantly. He looked round with Mr. Monroe, and saw what a disaster was impending. He went back to Argyleshire at once. He ordered his two sons home from Cambridge, and told Mrs. MacTavish to do her duty, and keep the creditors at bay: to scrimp, save, and borrow every farthing she could, and send it to him in Ronaldsay. He was horribly poor, and desperately

in debt. He had taken no rents from Ronaldsay for years; but the Ronaldsay people were flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; and so the great coarse bare-legged, highland giant, came back to them in their trouble; to live with them, and, if need were, to die with them.

“Our own people, Monroe. Our own flesh and blood, Monroe.”

As for Mr. Monroe, he well earned his crown of glory in this terrible winter, even if by long continuance in well doing, he had not earned it before. I know that what I have just written will be called by some people heretical, but it shall stand, and shall be repeated. He earned his crown; with his hair growing greyer week by week; with the people that he had loved so well dying round him; with the souls which he, in his way of speaking, would have said that he had brought to Christ; passing away from him too quickly for one word of farewell; that noble man worked on. I feel that I am unworthy to write about such a man. But there are such men. If I did not know one or two of them, I would not have dared to say so much about Mr. Monroe.

Let the glorious fellow be. Let his works speak

for him. *He* is no fictitious character, though I have altered his name, and changed his locality. There was another hero developed in this miserable winter, by name Gil Macdonald.

His restless soul, craving eagerly for work, of which there was none to be got; settled down, concentrated itself, in the work which Mr. Monroe and the MacTavish put before him. By night and by day, through frost and through snow, he, the best hill walker in the island, sped swiftly on messages of help and charity. But all the Gil Macdonalds, all the Mr. Monroes, all the MacTavishes in the world, could not send the thermometer up above freezing, and so the people died on, and despair began to settle down on all of them.

Then MacTavish's money failed. There had been little enough of it at first, for he had contracted heavy debts, to send his sons to Cambridge. First, he heard that the bailiffs were in his castle. Then his wife wrote, to warn him that writs were out against him, and that he might be taken. Gil Macdonald heard this, and merely mentioned it about among the young men in conversation. They were dull, heartless, and desperate enough, these young men, but it would have been a bad business

for any bailiff; who had tried to follow MacTavish to Ronaldsay.

“Our own flesh and blood, Gil. Our own flesh and blood.”

Things went on from bad to worse. Wearily each night the MacTavish and Mr. Monroe met, only to tell each other of some new disaster. One night MacTavish refused even the miserable supper which he and Mr. Monroe allowed themselves, and walked sulkily up and down the room. At last he broke out. He threw up his arms, and clutched his hair wildly in his hands.

“I will not bear it, Monroe; I will not bear it.”

“Be quiet, MacTavish; dinna rebel.”

“I tell you that I will rebel,” he answered furiously; doing exactly as Austin did on one occasion. “I tell you that I will not bear it. I tell you that God is unrighteous, unjust, vindictive. I have done enough to deserve His anger, but these poor sheep, what have they done?”

“Colin, Colin!” said the old man, throwing himself down before him, and clasping his bare knees, “dinna blaspheme in your wrath. Trust God, and think that every wild word uttered now, will be a worm to eat your heart till you meet him.”

"I will not! There is no mercy in heaven! My own people dying like dogs, and no help. I tell you that I will curse God and die!"

"Ye may curse God, but ye'll not die, my ain boy. He will punish you for this. He will let you live, MacTavish, till every wild word you have uttered just now will be a scorn and a loathing to you, till you see your folly and wickedness, and beg for forgiveness."

"Words! words! What is the use of cramming one's ear with them? I am hopeless and desperate, I tell you. What are words to me? Feed my people."

"Perhaps, Colin, by a little patience and humiliation they might be fed. Will you listen to me?"

The MacTavish sat down and listened, and as he did so, his face grew calmer. At last he said, "Say no more, Monroe. I were worse than a dog if I did not."

He wrote the following curious letter:—

"Grandmother,—I am humbled. I am humbled by famine. My people are dying here like sheep. I ask for nothing for myself—I only beg for them.

"I ask your forgiveness, certainly. I was in the wrong, let us say. My pride is so broken, that I

will allow anything. You will gain your suit about the farms at Inverhadden. I'm a ruined man, and have no more money to spend on law.

"Send me a thousand pounds worth of food here instantly. If you don't, we are all undone; for it is useless asking my mother. Forgive me or not, grandmother, but, in God's name save the Ronaldsay folk!

"MACTAVISH.

"To the dowager Lady Tullygoram, Barrock Lodge, Argyleshire."

To which Lady Tullygoram replied—

"Ablins, my ain Colin, we may both have been too tenacious of our rights. A body does na like to see herself wronged out of her own dower rights. The three Inverhadden farms have gone with the dower-lands of Tullygoram, for sax centuries, and I was no justified, in the interest of future dowagers, in giving up my rights. God kens, my bonny boy, I bear ye no ill-will.

"I send you twa hundred pounds. With the help of God, I will keep the Ronaldsay folk for you till better times. I have cleared the execution out of your castle, and sent the two lads back to their

studies. Though what the deil garred ye send them to a cockney university, I dinna ken.

“ELSPETH TULLYGORAM.”

So poor MacTavish was humbled, and prayed to be forgiven for the wild words he had used in his madness: let us hope he was forgiven. Better times began to dawn on them after this; but things are not mended all at once. When the tide is receding, and shipwrecked men, who have clung all night to the rock, begin to hope that the worst is over, and that their way to the shore is safe; often there comes some angry receding wave, and once more washes high above their heads, and makes them despair again.

So it was with the Ronaldsay famine. The MacTavish departed at the end of January, leaving things in a much better state. In February the frost broke, and then the new enemy appeared—typhus, bred by starvation and hardship. At first the people began dying nearly as fast as in the famine; then it got better, and then it got worse. Lady Tullygoram and the MacTavish did all they could—tried to keep a population of two thousand, for a year; with indifferent success, as you may imagine. When the

men got to their fishing again, the island got more cheerful. But there were no seed-potatoes. The last money that Lady Tullygoram could scrape together, was spent in buying seed-potatoes. She paid, noble old body! two hundred and seventy pounds for them in Glasgow, and sent them off as fast as they could be bought. The Ronaldsay folk got them all into the ground by the first week in April.

Gil Macdonald waited and saw the potatoes put in. He saw them come up; they looked bravely. He waited still longer; everything seemed mending. Then he started away, and came south to London to find Austin.

They began to dig in September: they were all rotten again—worse than last year. The sun began to south towards another winter worse than the last. Lady Tullygoram had spent every farthing she had. The MacTavish was as good as ruined: there was nothing but blank despair before them.

A Highland Society agent came over, and talked to them of fair lands sixteen thousand miles away. Some prepared to go, but for those who stayed (for only a few could go) what a prospect! MacTavish had applied for the Government loan, but, as he said, there was not the wildest probability of his being

able to set one man to work on the money before next spring. Things looked blacker than ever.

Mr. Monroe preached patience. On a Sabbath-day in November he preached earnestly and almost fiercely to them. "I tell you," he said, "not to rebel. I tell myself not to despair. I tell (say you) the surf not to moan on the reef; the wind not to whistle through the heather; the burn not to roar in the linn. Still I tell you to be patient—you, whose children have died before your eyes. I tell you to trust in God. You and I will meet at his throne, and then let none of you look me in the face, and say that I did not tell you this, that you must trust in God, for He cannot be unjust.

"Unjust! Is there one man or woman in this church to-day who does not envy those who have gone before us, and are waiting to welcome us—when we have dreed our weird—when we have done our day's work—when this tyranny is over-past? My ain people, for whom I have wrestled night and day in prayer, do not rebel. The riddle may whiles be hard to read, but trust God. Do I pray for rest? No. I only pray that I may be spared to see the end. The wild winter is coming down on us once more. Let us pray that

we may win through it, or, if not, that we may die trusting in God."

So he pleaded to them on the November Sabbath; and in the evening, in solitude, he prayed for them—prayed as he had done the year before—that the cup might pass away.

On the Monday morning, the answer to his prayer came. Over the morning sea, across the Kyle, from the mainland, a boat came plunging and leaping across the short, chopping swell, caused by the meeting of the tide and the south wind. The boat came over with a mail-bag, and in that mail-bag there was only one letter, and that letter was from the MacTavish to Mr. Monroe.

"DEAR OLD FRIEND,

"May God forgive me, if I have done wrong. What *could* I do? It is like tearing my heart out by the roots. It is a bitter, bitter dispensation.

"I have sold the island of Ronaldsay to an Englishman. It was the only chance of saving my own people—my own no longer—from starvation.

"They say he is noble and generous. He is, I know, very wealthy. He will, with his wealth, if he keeps half his promises, make the island a pros-

perous and a happy one. I have no heart left to say more.

"Yet I must go on. You must be gentle with him. You must tell the people to be gentle and polite to him. You know how proud and captious these English are. Give way to his every whim. If he is properly flattered, he may be induced to settle and build a house on the island; to do by the island what I, God forgive me! have never been able to do.

"He will be with you directly, Monroe. Be prepared. Get him to settle there. The pampered Cockney has got some whim about the island. Flatter it. Oh God, Monroe, that it should have come to this!"

Mr. Monroe turned to the few old peasants who were standing round him, and said—

"Here is bitter news. The MacTavish has sold the island."

"And us with it," said the eldest of them. "Aweel, things could be no waur. But hech, sirs! For a MacTavish to sell his ain flesh and blude to the Duke of Argyle!"

"It is not the Duke of Argyle. It is an Englishman."

"It does na much matter," said the old man, "that we, who beat the dust out of their coats so brawly at Dunbar, should be bought up by them, body and banes, like kye."

"Which battle of Dunbar do you mean?" said Mr. Monroe, sharply. "You seem to have forgotten either the first one, or the one which we call Preston Pans. There were twa battles by Dunbar, old man. Don't be a fool. Come home with me; I see hope in this."

So he did. This Englishman had money. Englishmen were noble and generous, in spite of their airs and graces. So Mr. Monroe, after laying his head on the table and weeping, because the Mac-Tavish was no longer master of the island; raised his head and smiled, because the island had been sold to an Englishman; who was very likely an insolent and exacting person, but who, at all events, would take care that his tenantry did not starve during the next winter.

Scotch pride is harder to humble than even English pride; but such a winter as 1845-46 will humble even a Scotchman's pride.

God forgive Mr. Monroe! The dear man went as near—well—fiction, as any man should. He

did not know even the name of this abominable Englishman, but he represented him as a model of high-hearted generosity. As for his wealth—there—Mr. Monroe felt justified by representing it as enormous, but unluckily he launched into figures, which he should not have done; and these figures grew under his hand, and got beyond his control in the most terrible way. Sometimes he “harked back,” and tried to make them smaller by ten thousand a year or so; but the Ronaldsay people did not like that; and so at last he expressed the income of the London Shopkeeper by waving his two hands abroad; as much as to say, that your figures failed to express the immense amount of income, of this Cockney shopkeeper.

At this same time Mr. Monroe committed himself to the statement, that the new owner of Ronaldsay was a cheesemonger—and what was more awful still, a cheesémonger in Piccadilly. Mr. Monroe denies having ever said such a thing; but one morning he was taxed with it, and instead of boldly denying the matter on the spot, he weakly gave in to it, and prevaricated. From this time it was an accepted fact, that the island had been bought by a cheesemonger in Piccadilly, which was a street in London. Mr.

Monr e never knew how this happened, but the folks were in a state of excitement, and he did not dare to contradict them. He went about like a guilty man—hoping, for his soul’s sake, that some one *might* have told him, that it was a cheesemonger in Piccadilly, and that he *might* have forgotten it. He knew nothing of the new owner of Ronaldsay—not even his name : nothing, save that he might be expected any day ; therefore this astounding canard about the cheesemonger was annoying. His object was to prepossess the people in favour of the new owner, and to get that new owner to stay on the island. At this time the good man was overheard to wish, that that feckless billie, Gil Macdonald, had stayed at hame, and not gone daundering down South.

But at last the cheesemonger from Piccadilly came, and took possession of his property after this manner :—

One morning, in the end of November, five or six days after the receipt of the MacTavish’s letter, it was reported to him that a steamer had rounded the south point of Donaldsay, and was bearing up for Ronaldsay. She carried no pennant. It was not the Shoals and Quicksands Lords coming their

rounds. This was your cheesemonger coming to take possession.

So it was. A small screw steamer came up, and eased off the pier of Ronaldsay. Mr. Monroe tumbled into a boat, went on board, and clambered into the waist.

Some one came forward to receive him—Gil Macdonald. No other. Mr. Monroe started back; but the cheesemonger fiction had been so burnt into his brain by repetition, that he said—

“Why, Gil, ye telled me in your letter that ye were in the gun-making trade—guns and cheeses! Is your master a general dealer, then?”

He passed on towards the cheesemonger and his wife, who stood on the quarter-deck. But there was no cheesemonger there: Austin Elliot and his wife Eleanor stood before him. Austin said, “Dear Mr. Monroe, I am your new landlord, and I am come to live and to die with you.” And the minister cast his hat on the deck and said, “God has been very good to us, Mr. Elliot—God has been very good to us.”

And so just when a story gets to be worth telling it has to come to an end. I have told you how Austin Elliot, generous, and ambitious, got fed on wind—would have gone, Lord knows where, if it

had not been for his dog. Now that he has developed into a useful man, we must leave him. The story of the work which he and Eleanor did in Ronaldsay would be but dull reading.

* * * * *

Once more the morning sun rises behind the hills of Argyleshire; once more the summer's morning raises the peat-smoke from a thousand cottages, in ten thousand purple valleys; once more the dawn smites the peak of Benmore of Ronaldsay, and creeps down; until the island awakens, and the men of Ronaldsay come abroad to their labour.

But it shines on a new Ronaldsay now. On vast tracts of young larch plantations, emerald green, among the dark heather; on broad yellow patches of soil, turned up on the lower hill-sides, where they are trenching the land for agriculture; better still, on sheets of rye and clover, giving good promise of a noble harvest. No more famine, no more dull, heart-gnawing sorrow, in Ronaldsay now. "He may do *anything* with Eleanor's money," said old Mr. Hilton, on his death-bed, little dreaming what he *would* do with it; little dreaming that his ill-earned money, would be spent in making the desert of Ronaldsay to blossom like a rose.

See the morning comes lower yet, and lower, until it shines strong and full on a new castle, built on the rise behind the village; on a broad stone terrace; on a little dark lady who walks abroad in the dew to look at her flowers, and leads a brave little lad, of three years old, by the hand.

A peaceful, calm little lady, dressed all in gray. She says to the toddling boy, "Come on, Charles; let us be ready to meet father as he comes from the hill!" and presently Austin comes brushing through the heather towards her, and takes his boy in his arms; so he and Eleanor walk slowly home along the terrace.

Who are these aloft here, on the windy mountain, in the morning air? A strange pair. One is a gigantic man, a kilted Highlander, with a square thoughtful face, who is leaning, in repose, against a rock; the other is also a tall man, but stone-blind, who turns and feels in the dark for his companion, though the level sun is blazing on his face.

"And so ye're no going to leave us, my lord," says the Highlander. "Dinna leave us, my lord; you have made yourself a necessity to us. I never flattered any man born of woman; but I must say this much, you would be sair missed in Ronaldsay."

Why the bairns would greet, and the dogs would howl, if they missed your kind dark face, at the quay end, when the boats come hame. Dinna gang South, my Lord, into that weary hurly-burly, with a' its Whiggeries, and Toryisms, and Papistries. Stay with them that love you, and play on your bonny new harp."

"I think I will live and die in Ronaldsay, Gil," said the blind man. "It is kind of you to lead me up here. I am looking towards the sun, now, for there is something in my eyes, which I think must be light; I must be looking towards those purple mountains on the mainland, you tell me of. I love to look towards the east, Gil; for the light which will open my eyes, and show me the faces of those I have loved so well, will come from thence, on the morning of the Resurrection."

So Lord Edward Barty and Gil Macdonald stood on the shoulder of Benmore, and looked eastward; while Robin the dog sat like a statue among the heather at their feet, and looked eastward also. And so the whole story comes to an end.

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